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Chapter 1. Skills required for setting/developing a rural tourism business

1.1 List of skills

Skills required for successfully running a rural tourism business:

· Researching skills	General Skills
· Networking skills	General Skills
· Finance skills	General skills
· ICT skills	General skills
· Communication skills	General skills
· Selling/Marketing skills	General skills
· Organisational skills	General skills
· Culinary skills	Specific to B&B activity
· Hospitality skills	Specific to B&B activity
· Maintenance skills	Specific to B&B activity
· Motivation	Personal Skills
· Self confidence	Personal Skills
· Flexibility	Personal Skills
· Sociability skills	Personal Skills
· Responsibility	Personal Skills
· Self discipline	Personal Skills

Group 1 – Very Important

Communication Skills

Culinary Skills

Hospitality skills - "Feel at home in someone else's home"

Group 2 - Important

Pan- European:

- Basic ICT Skills –including internet and email
- Internet access
- Email account
- Company email rather than hotmail/yahoo/gmail
- Email skills
- Website set up
- Content management – updatable content and keeping content up to date
- Internet awareness
- Search engine optimisation (SEO)
- Client database
- Reservations system
- Online booking
- E-commerce site

Organisational Skills:

- Operations of business: establishing work flow e.g. breakfast, check out, cleaning, check in, purchases/provisions, maintenance etc.
- Internal and external maintenance
- Management of booking system

Office and Administration skills

- Compliance with local regulations

- Compliance with fiscal regulations
- Management of visitor's register/client records
- Invoicing/receipts
- Payment of accounts
- Use of office equipment e.g. phone/fax/email
- Archiving/Filing of records
- Regular administration

Communication skills

- Target market of info sheet: B&B owners
- General communication skills
- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Non Verbal Communication (e.g. body language, eye contact, personal space)
- Active listening
- How to deal with an international tourist

Hospitality skills

- Target market of info sheet: B&B owners
- Personality of owner and staff (personal touch, local knowledge)
- Dealing with public (etiquette at local and international level)
- Basic language skills (foreign language dictionary)
- Customer care (satisfying needs/requirements of customer, dealing with complaints)
- Welcome visitors onto home/premises
- Cleanliness of B&B and facilities
- General housekeeping (layout of rooms; kitchen, dining room, lounge, bedrooms)
- Information on a range of local events and amenities
- Tourist literature
- How to set out internal rules (times of meals, opening and closing times etc)
- Assertiveness with customers
- Creativity (differ from competition – additional activities on site e.g. Rural farm)

Culinary skills

- Target market of info sheet: B&B owners
- Table etiquette (Presentation of cutlery, glasses etc)
- Serving etiquette
- Food presentation and hygiene
- Using local, natural produce (when possible home grown or homemade)
- Cooking

1.2 Instruments for assessment and development of skills

Rural Tourism, something for you? Self assessment questionnaire Personal Assessment Survey

Working in any home-based business becomes a delicate balancing act between work and family. The pressures of business could get the best of you

and cause some conflicts in the family. You must put a lot of thought into how your family and the business can function together. Consider these points and discuss as a family before reaching your final decision.

Step 1.

Is Agro tourism really the correct business for you? Find out with the following questions. Answer the questions with yes or no. Complete the survey for both yourself and for your partner. Have your partner do the same. (So you both fill out the survey twice.)

1. I enjoy getting up early and preparing meals.
2. I'm highly organized and manage my time well.
3. I'm self-motivated and a self-starter.
4. I can do several tasks at one time.
5. I enjoy entertaining.
6. I find it easy to get along with most people.
7. I'm tolerant and patient.
8. I am kind and hospitable.
9. I can handle conflict without alienation.
10. I work well under pressure.
11. I can work long hours and face a variety of interruptions.
12. I learn from mistakes and make changes as needed.
13. I keep my home neat and clean at all times.
14. I enjoy performing home maintenance.
15. I'm cheerful.
16. I enjoy interior decorating and remodeling.
17. I enjoy gardening and landscaping.
18. I have a regular income.
19. I communicate well on the phone.
20. I write well and regularly.
21. I'm persistent.
22. I consider myself a risk-taker.
23. I have a high energy level.
24. I enjoy serving others.
25. I allow unknown persons on my court.
26. I consider myself flexible.
27. I have a good business sense.
28. I can handle the business end of a B&B.
29. I handle emergencies well.
30. I am considerate to give up a part of my privacy.
31. I've got the budget for investments.
32. I can explain and speak clearly.
33. I can deal with criticism.

If you have answered more than 8 questions with "No" than maybe rural tourism is not the correct business for you and you should consider another business category.

If you have answered less than 8 questions with "no", compare your answers with your partner's. Set out your strengths and weaknesses.

However, if you answered 8 or less questions with "No", than carry on with Step 2.

Step 2.

In this part we try to find out which type of recreation fits the best with you.

We've made a sharing with four category's: To provide day recreation, recreational staying, products sale in house and proving stables. Answer the following questions:

1. Do you allow people at night on your court?
Yes => recreational staying would be something for you
No => recreational staying is not an activity for you
2. Do you like it to cultivate or produce your own products so you can sell them to your customers?
Yes => House sale would be something for you
No => House sale is not an activity for you
3. Do you like it to work with horses?
Yes => Providing stables would be something for you
No=> Providing stables is not an activity for you
4. If you answered "No" on these three questions, day recreation would be something for you.

General consideration

Success for everybody in business - including B&B owners - comes down to seven key skills:

Confidence - the ability to appear relaxed and stand out from the crowd.

Approach - the ability to put people - your guests - at ease and start a conversation.

Eye Contact - the ability to make your eyes smile when you meet people - your guests - and to maintain appropriate eye contact when you're in conversation.

Listen - the ability to focus on what a person - your guest - is saying and to show them that you are interested in who and what they are.

Engage - ability to stimulate conversation - how to make small talk big.

Body Language - the ability to use your voice and posture to put others - your guests - at ease and build a rapport with them.

Adopt a Winning Attitude - Attitude creates your mood and that sets the tone of your voice along with your facial expressions and your body language. Feel relaxed and comfortable with yourself. You will then come across as a very confident person, and this is one of the most crucial elements for success.

Be enthusiastic and passionate about what you do - your Bed and Breakfast Genuine passion will always be clearly communicated, and more importantly remembered. So much more cost effective than a business card.

And lastly dress appropriately, easy when you are going out to a meeting or event, but much more difficult when rolling out of bed to cook the breakfast

Wear an apron when serving breakfast, but take it off when introducing yourself to guests for the first time.

Use skills you have learnt in other situations to help you to appear cool, calm and collected when dealing with even the most difficult clients - guests at your B&B establishment.

Build up a few introductory questions you feel confident about asking your guests when they come through the door of your bed and breakfast for the first

time. You may have asked the same question more times than you care to remember, but the guests you are greeting for the first time don't know you have.

Remember you are on home ground and no matter how comfortable your guests appear it's never easy to walk into someone else's home for the first time.

Put your guests at their ease in the first few minutes by demonstrating that you are really interested in making their stay at your B&B comfortable. Make them feel welcome by being as helpful and friendly as possible. Or give them some information that will make their stay with you more enjoyable.

Other important considerations

Running a bed and breakfast is real work. Your guests expect clean rooms, delicious breakfasts, and service that goes above and beyond. You'll need to get up early, often go to bed late and - at least in the beginning - you'll have to do all of the housework, prepare the meals, and manage the business (such as bookkeeping).

As a business, Bed & Breakfasts are dependent on their guests schedule and families must manage around them.

- How will this type of scheduling affect you and your family?
- Do you have young children that need your care and attention?
- Do you and family members have commitments or obligations which will interfere or conflict with guests' needs?
- Will you be able to handle the tasks required by both your business and family?
- Do you have the energy level needed?

Action Plan

To make your conclusion, by putting your ideas on a row and determine your action point's, you can fill in this action plan. We would like to help you getting started with the conversations that you're going to have with family, friends, colleagues and advisors and further elaboration of your plans.

1. We are interested in the following types of rural tourism:

2. Our motivation towards rural tourism:

3. We would like to aim ourselves on:

Specific groups Yes / No

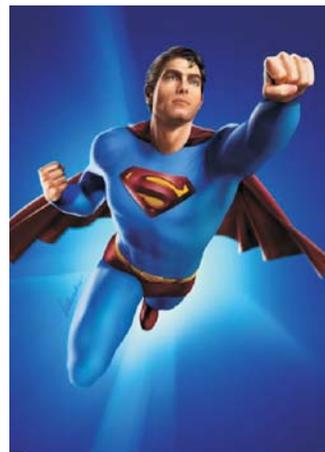
If yes circle the dot:

- Families
- Bachelors and spinsters without kids
- Elderly people 50+
- Children
- Other like:

Groups Yes / No

If yes circle the dot:

- Companies
- School classes
- Families
- Other like:



4. This is what we have to offer towards recreants and tourists at the moment:

.....

5. We would like to develop or find out the following activities:

.....

6. Our strengths are:

.....

7. Our weaknesses are:

.....

8. Possible threats in the surrounding area:
(for example: Our neighbors sell cheese and milk products)

.....

9. Our chances are (as in the market):

.....

10. We still want some answers on these following questions:

.....

11. The first three action points that I am going to carry out are:
(like, found out what the municipality and bank allows towards my business plan)

.....

1.3 Competencies development methodology

The management of the tourism business consists of internal activities carried out within the accommodation structure but also external activities (e.g. networking, marketing & promotion etc.).

As it can be seen in the first chapter the list of competencies needed for running such kind of business is wide and includes varied knowledge and skills from organizational skills to communication, financial to networking, hospitality to legislation, teamwork to ICT, general managing to documentation, culinary to maintenance.

The following is a guide methodology to develop the competencies requested for starting up and running a rural tourism business:

Content	Methods/ Activities
Communication & team work	
Communication process. Typology (verbal & nonverbal communication). Means of communication Communication skills: active listening, assertiveness, feedback	Presentation Facilitated group discussion Group and individual activities: blind drawings, psychometric tests Role play: Mime, difficult client

Neociation Behavioral psychology - difficult situations management Teams and groups. Life cycle of groups. Roles in groups	Brainstorming
Documentation & Researching	
Documentation - methods, sources, Tourist interests places Research - steps, methods and tools	Presentation Debate Case study
Information and communication technology	
IT applications - utility software Database Data security Internet & e-mail Search engine optimisation Online booking and e-commerce Websites and update content management	Presentation Exemplification Group and individual activities
Marketing and promotion	
Marketing elements. Marketing policy Selling methods and technics Tourist services promotion - methods and strategy Client satisfaction assessment	Presentation Debate Brainstorming Case study Role play: Mystery shopping
Management	
Introduction to management Planing - role and methodology of planing Management - coordination - control Organisational structure of a tourism business. Typology of services (front office, laundry, reception, kitchen, restaurant, security etc.) Internal rules Management of visitor's: register/client records Human resources development.	Presentation Facilitated group discussion Exemplification Group and individual activities Role play: recruitment interview
Customer care and hospitality	
Hospitality concept Dealing with public (customer welcoming and reception, customer care etc.)	Presentation Case study Role play: simulation of a customer welcoming & care situation

Hospitality concept Dealing with public (customer welcoming and reception, customer care etc.)	
Legislation	
Specific legislation Health & Food safety legislation Security legislation First aid elements Labor protection Commercial contracts	Presentation Exemplification Role play: simulation of a fire alarm Exercises
Finances	
Income and outcome topology Financial documents: invoices/ receipts, payment documents, balance sheet Financial reports The budget The profit Financial plan	Presentation Exemplification Exercises Case study
Culinary	
Table etiquette (Presentation of cutlery, glasses etc) Serving etiquette Food presentation and hygiene Cooking elements	Presentation Exemplification Individual activities



Chapter 2. Communication & Negotiation

2.1 Communication

Oral, written and non verbal communication skills and active listening skills required by B&B owners.

Communication (from Latin cum = with and munire = to tie and from the verb communico = to share) is the process of conveying information from a sender to a receiver with the use of a medium in which the communicated information is understood by both sender and receiver. It is a process that allows organisms to exchange information by several methods.

The daily conversations among people and advertising or public relation are clear examples of communication. The communicative process involves human beings or anything else. Indeed, it's the recipient who gives the message a meaning, it's the human creative power that gives significance to everything making communication "a system" characterized by imagination and symbols.



The idea of communication implies the interaction among the different participants, that is a certain level of cooperation among them. Every communicative process functions in two directions and some experts state there is no communication if signs and information go one way. When someone speaks to a vast audience without being obliged to listen, a simple conveyance of signs or information takes place.

The communicative process involving human beings is then characterized by two opposite elements: on one hand the communication considered as a simple cooperation activity during which two or more people "build together" a reality and share common truth; on the other hand the mere one-way transmission of a message such as commercials or military orders. Between the two extremes various communication processes obviously take place every day in the social environment where people live.

Communication requires that all parties understand a common language that is exchanged. There are auditory means, such as speaking, singing and sometimes tone of voice, and nonverbal, physical means, such as body language, sign language, paralanguage, touch, eye contact, or the use of writing. Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. Use of these processes is developmental and transfers to all areas of life: home, school, community, work, and beyond. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur. Communication is the articulation of sending a message,

through different media whether it be verbal or nonverbal, so long as a being transmits a thought provoking idea, gesture, action, etc.

Communication happens at many levels (even for one single action), in many different ways, and for most beings, as well as certain machines. Several, if not all, fields of study dedicate a portion of attention to communication, so when speaking about communication it is very important to be sure about what aspects of communication one is speaking about. Definitions of communication range widely, some recognizing that animals can communicate with each other as well as human beings, and some are more narrow, only including human beings within the parameters of human symbolic interaction.

Nonetheless, communication is usually described along a few major dimensions: Content (what type of things are communicated), source, emisor, sender or encoder (by whom), form (in which form), channel (through which medium), destination, receiver, target or decoder (to whom), and the purpose or pragmatic aspect. Between parties, communication includes acts that confer knowledge and experiences, give advice and commands, and ask questions. These acts may take many forms, in one of the various manners of communication. The form depends on the abilities of the group communicating. Together, communication content and form make messages that are sent towards a destination. The target can be oneself, another person or being, another entity (such as a corporation or group of beings).

There are four main areas of communication; these include written communication, oral communication, non verbal communication and active listening.

Communication is of paramount importance to B&B owners on all four of these levels.

Tourist operators are required to be communication agents, that is people able to convey information about the products and the resources tourists can find in a specific area, aiming at promoting their accommodation and the place where they are located.

The main purpose of tourist operators is "to welcome" guests, to make them feel at ease, to use every means of communication (above all non-verbal) to express the idea that their accommodation is safe, comfortable, familiar, clean and professionally run.

Particularly, these features will be applied to the rural tourism buildings and to the B&Bs because these structures are characterized by feelings of familiarity, a friendly relationship with the environment (the historical centre of the town in the case of a B&B) and with nature, the typical food offered – naturally prepared following the old family recipes and the local traditions. These are the elements tourist operators are asked to communicate through every means because they are what guests expect when they plan a stay in such a kind of accommodation.

Oral, written, non-verbal communication skills are obviously required to the operators who will also use the necessary techniques for active listening activity.

Written Communication

It is essential that B&B proprietors are able to communicate with potential customers via promotional literature such as brochures, flyers, press releases and advertisements. It is important that the proprietor can explain service they

offer, how it will benefit the guest and any unique selling points, being descriptive about the rooms and food and facilities provided is a very effective persuasive marketing tool. Indeed, through images tourists can realize more directly the features of a specific geographic area, the products offered and the general atmosphere of a holiday to be spent close to nature.

Written communication can rely on the most advanced technologies provided by ITC. Internet communication and online reservations are essential.

A website containing relevant up to date information on the business can make the decision and booking process more convenient for both the customer and the proprietor. If the B&B owner is IT literate they can keep a database of all previous guests or names of any people who enquired and communicate with them on an ongoing basis. Follow up emails can be sent out to guests to see if they enjoyed their stay or if they could suggest any improvements. Also emails can be regularly sent to inform clients of any special offers or new facilities or services provided.

Oral Communication

Oral communication aims to hide the separation of a speech into words because it reproduces a continuous sound with a rhythm and an intonation that characterize the source language.

It doesn't follow the same rules as the written text and it is the more direct and free way of communication.

It is important that the B&B proprietor builds up relationships with and networks with relevant support organisations. This will mean that they will get local referrals and positive word of mouth. Becoming an active member at formal networking events can also be beneficial where proprietors can take a presenting opportunity and talk about their experiences and their business to local business people and members of the community, these events could be for example Chamber of Commerce events.

Oral communication between the guest and the proprietor or staff must also be strong, it is important that staff members convey all useful information about the services the B&B offers, the local area and local traditions so that the guest has the best possible stay. It is also of vital importance that the proprietor can explain to the guest the rules and conditions of their stay and what is expected of their behaviour, this will mean that everybody understands their roles and responsibilities from the beginning of the stay.

Non Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication involves every aspect of a communicative process that isn't linked to the semantic level of the message conveyed, that is the literal meaning of the words forming the message itself. This type of communication is based on body movements, facial expressions and the rhythm and volume of the voice. In this context, then, the efficiency of a message relies only in part on the literal meaning of the words and the typical elements of the non-verbal communication deeply affect how the message itself is received.

The atmosphere and mood of a B&B very much depends on its staff. Staff should shake hands with all guests to make them feel individually welcome and important. When staff smile and speak using positive tones this will create a

friendly welcoming atmosphere. Management should set the standards of how non verbal communication should be conveyed and this will then filter down to any staff and the overall mood will be established.

Feelings of familiarity and the willingness to satisfy the guests' expectations create a communicative process that goes beyond any written or oral text.

Active listening

Active listening skill is based on empathy and the ability to accept others. It is also based on a positive approach to people, characterized by "an environment where a person feels understood" without being judged.

Active listening is an essential form of communication within a B&B, it is vital to collect every kind of information, to understand customers needs and wants for market research purposes. This will allow the proprietor to provide a service which will satisfy all of the customers wants ensuring they fully enjoy their stay, will return to the B&B and will recommend to others. Listening to what guests have to say will make them feel comfortable and welcome and that they are able to approach the staff during any point of their stay. It is important to make the guest feel at home in someone else's home.

The B&B operators have to be able to identify with their guests and be empathetic with them, trying to understand their point of view and share, as far as it is possible, their feelings. The operators are asked to be sure of their ability to understand both what the guests say and how they interact, giving them the possibility of making questions to improve the reciprocal understanding.

This type of communication is also an inherent part of customer care, listening carefully to any issues the visitor may have and resolving these or providing solutions. It is also of vital importance that the B&B proprietor listens to guests from all parts of the world learning about and understanding all of their individual cultures. This will show the guests that the proprietor is interested in their background and will again add to customer service.

The tourists who decide to spend their holiday in a rural tourism accommodation or at a B&B look for a closer relationship with the place chosen as their destination.

They want to discover the culture, the language, the traditions of the host country to have an exchange that is an important way of personal and cultural growth and at the same time to enjoy the new territories ready to be discovered.

2.2 Negotiation

Negotiation is a dialogue intended to resolve disputes, to produce an agreement upon courses of action, to bargain for individual or collective advantage, or to craft outcomes to satisfy various interests.

Negotiation is a skill that anyone can learn and practice. The necessary skills required for successful negotiations can be listed as:

- The ability to define a range of objectives yet be flexible about some of them.
- The ability to explore the possibilities of a wide range of options.
- The ability to be well prepared.
- The ability to listen to and question other parties.
- The ability to set priorities.

- Understand cultures, especially your own.
- Gather information and use this to improve what you offer.
- Invest in personal relationships with guests, suppliers, competitors etc.
- Ask questions, seek information and understanding.

For a B&B owner it is important to use negotiation in the following areas:

When dealing with suppliers it is essential to negotiate best deals – running a B&B is a business so it is very important to keep costs to a minimum. It is important to ask negotiate discounts for purchasing in bulk or being a regular customer. It is essential to build up a relationship with and communicate on a regular basis with your suppliers. This could prove a very lucrative relationship and may allow you to be more cost effective than your competition which can result in higher profit margins or can be passed on to your customers.

It is also important that you work with and negotiate with your competitors instead of ignoring them. An agreement may be put in place when they are fully booked or are not what the guest was looking for the competitor may refer them to your B&B/Guest house (gather overspill). Again this could be a very lucrative agreement.

Negotiating with local press and Tourist Board is essential when it comes to promoting your business and can present many marketing opportunities. You could come up with an agreement were they publish a press releases on your business free of charge, write reviews free of charge or give discounts if you are a regular advertiser. The Tourist Board may agree to actively promote your business or even recommend it; you could also become involved in any events that they are running in return for this.

Negotiating with guests so that they know what is expected of their behaviour is very important from the first moment you meet them. If you build up a verbal contract to let the guest know how they should behave and what they will get in return then there should be no problems throughout the stay.

There will inevitably be genuine complaints or difficult customers, negotiating here is very important to ensure that any problem is resolved and that both the guest and the proprietor are happy with the final agreement. It is better to resolve the problem there and then as they will return to the guest house/ B&B and will go on to positively promote your business via positive word of mouth.



Chapter 3. Hospitality

3.1 Definition & considerations

Hospitality is the relationship process between a guest and a host, and it also refers to the act or practice of being hospitable, that is, the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill. Hospitality frequently refers to the hospitality industry jobs for hotels, restaurants, casinos, catering, resorts, clubs and any other service position that deals with tourists. Hospitality is also known as the act of generously providing care and kindness to whomever is in need.

The history of the hospitality is a very long one. As a standard of conduct, hospitality has been variously considered throughout history as a law, an ethic, a principle, a code, a duty, a virtue, etc. These prescriptions were created for negotiating ambiguous relationships between guests, hosts, citizens, and strangers. Despite its ancient origins and ubiquity amongst human cultures, the concept of hospitality has received relatively little attention from moral philosophers, who have tended to focus their attention on other ethical concepts, e.g. good, evil, right, and wrong.

Yet hospitality as a moral imperative, or ethical perspective, preceded many other prescriptions for ethical behavior. In ancient Middle Eastern, Greek and Roman cultures, the Ethic of Hospitality was a code that demanded specific kinds of conduct from both guests and hosts. One example: Chivalry required men of station to offer food and lodging to any men of station that requested it.

In many ways, these standards of behavior have survived into the present day in the commercial hospitality industry, where descendants of the ancient ideas continue to inform current standards and practices.

3.2 Qualitative research on hospitality & dealing with the tourists

In order to have a wide vision of hospitality concept and to facilitate understanding of cultural differences, the partnership carried out a qualitative research in each partner country. The study based on interview method using an interview guide with 5 questions.

Concerning the understanding of hospitality, the research revealed that there is a consensus on the concept at European level. Hospitality is a complex of actions that ensure customers welcoming, services and the personal and professional link between the host and the client. No matter what countries were leaving in, the asked persons highlighted some key elements of hospitality:

- Customer care: welcoming people, going above and beyond what guests/visitors expect, being friendly and kind, being a good host, make people feel at home and as part of the family, creating a comfortable atmosphere, respect, smiling, entertainment;
- Good quality of accommodation and services.

Some of the surveyed persons included into the definition of hospitality specific elements connected to rural tourism activities: to let the guests to "taste" the agriculture or farming and their products, to offer a unique experience to the tourists: farming, the charm of the rural areas rich in

traditions, customs, habits, and good quality agricultural products.

The research proposed to identify how understanding of hospitality influences the way of dealing with tourists. The answers showed a direct link between those two elements. As the owners of the tourism business declared, there is no difference in dealing with internal or international tourists, both categories being treated the same manner, accordingly to the way they define hospitality: "The national and international tourists are treated in the same way", "appropriate to their needs", "they are given warm, friendly treatment", "taking care of every detail to maintain a high quality standard, so that they can enjoy a pleasant/comfortable stay and to feel at home"

Referring to rural tourism most of the questioned persons specified that usually, the guests want to escape from stress and daily routine, and are looking for tranquility, to enjoy the purity of the nature and good cooking. In this respect the owners try to give them space but at the same time to let them know that if they need any help just to ask because they would be offered all they want in a warm and cordial atmosphere".

Also there were offered tips for dealing with tourists:

- "It's important to show a personal interest in them and build up a relationship throughout their stay"
- Keep in regular contact – for example sending emails with information on any special offers we have
- To offer information on local traditions and gastronomy, what to do, where to eat, how to get there ("we have all kinds of pamphlets and books available for customers")
- To buy special products
- To ask them for their wishes for breakfast
- To offer them later breakfast times so that they can have a lie in
- To help them with specific information, advices and personal recommendations (local attractions)
- To provide a relaxing environment for example: a garden, views, living room with fire.

Concerning the difficulties the rural tourism business owners come across when dealing with tourists of other nationalities, the biggest problem proved to be the communication in a foreign language. There were listed also other minor difficulties with the specification that, sometimes, the internal tourists are more pretentious than the international:

- Cultural differences
- Various breakfast times and types
- Requests for special local products which were expensive
- More demand for organic food

There were also enunciated problems which are more or less under the control of rural tourism business owners:

- The poor infrastructure or public services
- Understanding local money
- The economical crisis

All of the interviewed persons took different actions to overcome those difficulties:

- Foreign language learning or hiring foreign language speaker personnel

- Having national – international languages dictionaries and international tourism books
- Offering different services in their own languages
- Offering alternative services
- Offering different types of entertainment including traditional evenings (traditional food, drink, folklore)
- Finding “middle of the road”
- Making breakfast as we serve it

The economical crisis effects reflected in the prices policy. Some of the interviewed persons declared that, because of the decrease in the number of guests comparing with the last year they had to adopt lower prices.

Setting apart from the competition and making the business more attractive is the goal of all tourism business owners. Here are some ways of doing that:

- Diversify tourist packages (biking, fishing, equestrian tourism, guided tours, farming, crafts learning etc)
- Offering typical products (craft products, food, drink etc.)
- Providing an outstanding product and better value for money, including the human relationship that is the basis of the business
- Making the building and garden look open for visitors
- Good marketing strategy: well defined target market, contacts with the tourists office, brochures, being a member of a tourist network/association, a good website with an online booking system and regional links, strong branding
- Maintaining the relationship with the clients as they would be a part of the family
- Offering the customers different things than the competition such as new proposals for their free time
- Good location, beautiful gardens
- Offering an airport pick up service to save the guest any hassle when they arrive
- An extensive knowledge of the local area
- Displaying art work of local artists
- Offering discounts in local commercial business (“we built up links with the restaurants we recommend and in return they will recommend our guest house”)
- Giving guests a small gift when they are leaving
- Building strong reputation throughout the local area
- Establish exactly what the guests expect from their visit at the very first meeting so that to match these needs
- Giving the guests lots of advice and information about the history, culture, festivals, local events, spots etc. – help them to make the most out of their holiday
- Greeting / welcoming the guest in their native language
- Learning about the guests' cultures and traditions to understand them in more detail
- Emailing guests with maps, directions, bus numbers and other essential information 5 days before their arrival
- Taking photographs of all our guests and put them on a map to show that people from all over the world are very welcome

Conclusions: always hope for the best and don't forget: marmalade is always good and the little touches make all the difference!

3.3 Practical guide and tips for B&B

Starting a B&B

B&B is a overnight accommodation for a touristic short stay including breakfast. A B&B is situated in a house and is run by the owners.

When you want to start a B&B you must have the quality of the definition of hospitality or practice to get that quality. That's really important because in a B&B the contact with the guest is more informal then for example big hotels and resorts. The welcome will be more personal as well the treatment of the guests.

When you start a B&B you will share some of your properties and share a bit of your privacy with a stranger. How you treat that guest depend on the way you like it or not. The guest always notice if you don't like your work, so be sure that you send the right feeling to the guests otherwise there is a big chance for the guest not to return to the B&B in the near future. Never let the guest to notice that you don't like them and try to build up a bond with them.

The most important qualities are:

- Good care for the guests
- Being friendly
- Keeping order
- Clear talking and explaining

When you start and take care of the B&B you should know that the B&B will become a big part of your life. To be sure that a B&B ownership is something for you it will help to think about this questions:

- do I have enough space for a B&B?
- do I allow strangers in my house?
- am I friendly and hospitable?
- do I accept to reduce my privacy?
- do I have enough time to run a B&B?
- do I accept to invest in my B&B?
- can I speak and explain clearly?
- do I want to take care of people?
- can I work hygienic?
- can I react good on criticism?
- can I work with reservations and computers?

At the start you must invest a lot of your time in the B&B. During the time you take care of the B&B, the guest can contact you day and night for questions or other comments. It's not necessary to be home all day when there are guest but be sure that you will be in contact if it's needed. Most of the guests will make a reservation before they come so a lot of time can be shared over the days before the guests will come. The preparations what takes the most of the time will be:

- Handling with the reservations.
- Welcoming the guests.
- Cleaning and preparing the guesthouse or room.
- Take care of the breakfast.

- Take care of the promotion activities of the B&B.

The guests want to have access to the guest place all the time, so you should give them a key to enter the room so you don't need to be home all the time.

Promotion

Promotion is very important for the B&B. Try to make contact with local tourism and travel agencies, internet sites and other tourism sightseeing's. Also it's good to make brochures and lay them in public places. Make newsletters to keep in contact with the guests who already visited your B&B once.

Activities

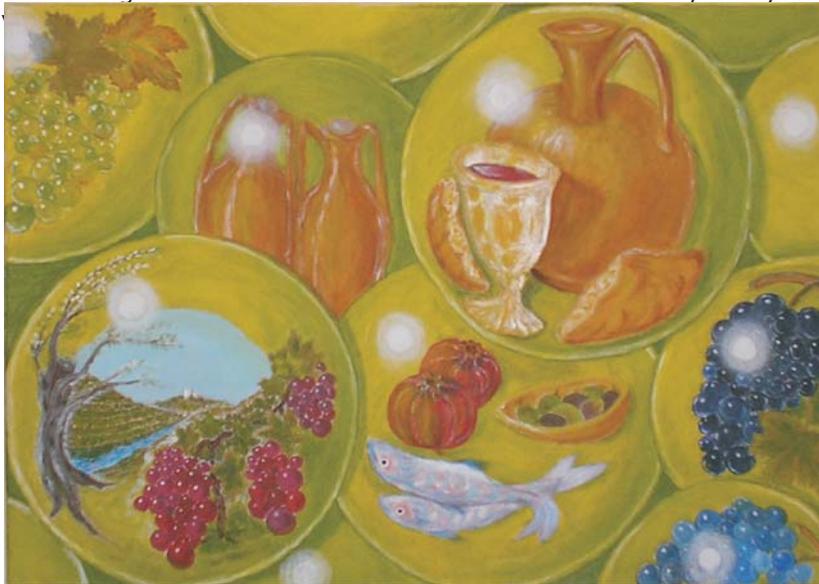
In a lot of cases the guest come to the B&B to enjoy the region and landscape and will stay for a few days. The B&B is the start to day trips, bicycle tours and other recreation. You can make more profit by renting bicycles, cars or making bicycle and walking information brochures. Also you can make advertisements of the different things you offer. It will be more attractive for the guest to come.

Accommodation & Services

It's important to owe enough space to build and take care of a B&B. When there is a shortage of space the guests will not come.

For the breakfast it's a good thing to use typical products of the region. Be sure you work hygienic and serve a breakfast with good quality.

At the welcome of the guests you must be at home and try to be sure that the guest is happy when she/he arrives because this is the first impression she/he will get of the B&B; be also sure that the guest is happy when leaving, because then she/he will forget the things what maybe went wrong. Try to discover if the guest needs a lot of interest and attention or not, then you know how





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