

NORBERT KAWĘCKI

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4601-6967>

University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska

Faculty of Economics. Department of Intellectual Capital and Quality

pl. M. Curie-Skłodowskiej 5, 20-031 Lublin, Poland

norbert.kawecki@googlegmail.com

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Agritourism

Wpływ pandemii COVID-19 na agroturystykę

Abstrakt: Autor artykułu przedstawia aktualny temat dotyczący wpływu pandemii COVID-19 na agroturystykę. W pierwszej części dokonano przeglądu literatury międzynarodowej i polskiej w zakresie wpływu pandemii oraz jej skutków w obszarze prowadzonej działalności jaką jest agroturystyka. W dalszej części pracy autor przedstawia materiały i metody zastosowane w badaniu. Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań wraz z opisami i objaśnieniami zostały rozwinięte w trzeciej części artykułu. W ostatniej części pracy przedstawiono wnioski z przeprowadzonych badań potwierdzając postawioną tezę. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie wpływu pandemii COVID-19 na obszar agroturystyki w pięciu województwach. Zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego a kwestionariusz został wysłany za pomocą social mediów. Najważniejszą konkluzją jest to, że pandemia COVID-19 miała wpływ na agroturystykę powodując zmiany zarówno w kwestii finansowej, jak i form marketingowych zastosowanych do usprawnienia działania biznesu.

Słowa kluczowe: COVID-19; pandemia; agroturystyka

Abstract: The author of the article presents the current topic regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agritourism. In the first part, the international and Polish literature is reviewed in terms of the impact of the pandemic and its consequences in the area of agritourism. In the further part of the work, the author presents the materials and methods used in the study. The results of the research, along with descriptions and explanations, are developed in the third part of the article. The last part of the work presents the conclusions of the research, confirming the thesis. The aim of the article is to show the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the agritourism area in five provinces. The diagnostic survey method was used and the questionnaire was sent via social media. The most important conclusion is that the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on agritourism, causing changes both in the financial issue and in the forms of marketing used to improve business operations.

Keywords: COVID-19; pandemic; agritourism

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry have been hit hardest by the current COVID-19 pandemic and it has led to a complete stagnation in a multi-billion dollar industry. Current research, through literature, led to findings that indicated the following aspects in agritourism (Gössling, Scott, Hall 2021; Adom, Alimov, Gouthami 2021; Chin, Dato Musa 2021; Roman, Grudzień 2021):

- business diversification towards product innovation and agribusiness expansion to mitigate loss and income from tourism,
- digital transformation such as a tracking app contacts and using the social media networks to promote agritourism as low-risk tourism,
- adaptive human resource strategy by encouraging to build community capabilities such as upskilling and training local farmers to stimulate new agritourism skills and create more workers ready for the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdown restrictions on human movement have caused a wreck on the global economy with serious post effects that will take years to repair (Adom, Adu-Mensah, Sekyere 2020; Gössling, Scott, Hall 2021). Tourism industries have been hit greatly, with their operations thrown in limbo as a result of international, national, regional, and local limitations imposed by governments as a result of the coronavirus pandemic (Gössling, Scott, Hall 2021). Agritourism could be a viable means of generating additional revenue for rural farmers, many of whom have been impoverished as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and recommending agritourism as a viable domestic and sustainable form of tourism in boosting the economies of rural agricultural communities (Adom, Alimov, Gouthami 2021). The fear of contracting infectious diseases still lingers on the minds of both domestic and international tourists (Williams, Baláz 2013).

The development of agritourism in rural agricultural communities is primarily aimed at increasing the economic gains of the farmers. It targets at alleviating poverty and boosting rural economies (Wojcieszak et al. 2020; Bhatta, Ohe 2020). This is because agritourism creates various employment avenues for many people in rural regions, especially, where agritourism is introduced. Privitera (2010), Sadowski and Wojcieszak (2019) as well as Zawadka (2019) argue that both the young and old in the rural farming communities get the chance of creating new businesses using agricultural products and raw materials or by engaging in on-site service jobs in agricultural production. Agritourism is a great educational tool because it helps visitors to learn both the traditional agricultural production and cultural heritage of rural communities through direct experience and direct observation (Petromana et al. 2016). Data collected by the GlobalWebIndex

(2020) report that despite the global crisis in the tourism industry, over 40% of the global population are optimistic that they will travel in the next six months in the post-COVID-19 period.

The table below presents an overview of the international and Polish literature from 2020–2022 in which problems of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agritourism are undertaken.

While doing researches in agritourism farms, Chin and Dato Musa (2021) presented the following conclusions:

- temperature checks at entrances and exits,
- limiting the number of visitors from small to medium groups only,
- adherence to social distancing measures,
- using contact tracing app to reduce health risks,
- management of visits at designated time slots to prevent negative environmental impacts,
- social media platforms used to keep engaging with potential visitors and promote positive destination brands.

Agritourism is one of the most important spheres of tourist activity in rural areas. Spending holidays on agritourism farms depends on many factors and results from a variety of reasons that guide tourists. Recognizing these factors during COVID-19 is particularly important as this allows changes that have occurred in this respect to be identified (Zawadka et al. 2022).

The main goal of the work is to present the impact of COVID-19 on agritourism in five different regions in Poland by questioning business owners. The subject has been chosen due to current situation of COVID-19 and changes that have taken place in the branch.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of article, the following thesis has been created:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly affected agritourism business.

In addition, the following research questions have been posed:

1. What are the causes of the problems that affected agritourism branch?
2. Has COVID-19 caused financial losses in the branch?
3. Has agritourism branch applied for government financial help?
4. What marketing has been used by the branch to increase interests of agritourism?
5. Have regional attractions helped the branch to increase the interests?

The method is based on the survey research created in googledocs.com. It contains 12 questions and it has been directed to agritourism branch. The survey

Tab. 1. List of publications from 2020–2022 about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agritourism (author's own study)

Authors	Title	Methods
Wojcieszak-Zbierska, Jęczyńska, Zawadka, Uglis (2020)	“Agritourism in Era of the Coronavirus (COVID-19): A Rapid Assessment from Poland”	Survey questionnaire of 576 respondents via social media
Zhu, Deng (2020)	“How to Influence Rural Tourism Intention by Risk Knowledge during COVID-19 Containment in China: Mediating the Role of Risk Perception and Attitude”	Questionnaire survey – 412 respondents
Rogerson, Rogerson (2021)	“COVID-19 and Changing Tourism Demand: Research Review and Policy Implications for South Africa”	Research produced by national governments, international organizations and of academic surveys completed in over 20 countries
Chin, Dato Musa (2021)	“Agritourism Resilience against COVID-19: Impacts and Management Strategies”	Interview questionnaire – 3 farms, 23 research participants
Anguera-Torrell, Vives-Perez, Aznar-Alarcón (2021)	“Urban Tourism Performance Index over the COVID-19 Pandemic”	Monthly-based data measuring the tourism industry's performance for these urban destinations has been collected. This data includes airlines' and hotels' performance, as well as potential tourists' online searches. The obtained data has been combined using a principal component analysis, generating the UTPI
Roman, Grudzień (2021)	“The Essence of Agritourism and Its Profitability during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic”	Interview questionnaire – 32 owners of agritourism farms
Magno, Cassia (2021)	“Effects of Agritourism Businesses' Strategies to Cope with the COVID-19 Crisis: The Key Role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Behaviours”	Survey questionnaire – 967 agritourism business
Li, Zhang, Yang, Singer, Cui (2021)	“Urban and Rural Tourism under COVID-19 in China: Research on the Recovery Measures and Tourism Development”	Analyze the data for high-frequency words and analyzed the discourse of stakeholders within the newspaper text

Adom, Alimov, Gouthami (2021)	“Agritourism as a Preferred Travelling Trend in Boosting Rural Economies in the Post-COVID-19 Period: Nexus Between Agriculture, Tourism, Art and Culture”	Mini-review of existing theoretical and empirical studies
Polukhina, Seresheva, Efremova, Suranova, Agalakova, Antonov-Ovseenko (2021)	“The Concept of Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in the Face of COVID-19 Crisis: Evidence from Russia”	Combined a number of methods and techniques, namely desk research, statistical analysis, and analysis of empirical data obtained by means of in-depth interviews, as well as a survey using a formal questionnaire
Vaishar, Štátná (2020)	“Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Tourism in Czechia Preliminary Considerations”	Analysis of five rural micro-regions of the South Moravian region based on press and internet news

has been sent via social media or by e-mail with the link attached with instruction and a request to fill in the form. Each question had a single-choice option. It was directed to the owners of agritourism businesses located in the following voivodeships: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Małopolskie, Mazowieckie.

The survey has been sent to 60 agritourism business owners. It was chosen based on personal contacts owned by the author of the article. There were received 40 responses out of 60, which constitutes 66.7%. The survey was developed in November 2021. The main goal of the study was to confirm the trends in agritourism branch caused by the COVID-19 pandemic after researches conducted by the author.

RESULTS

The survey has been sent to agritourism business owners. Women constituted 45% of the respondents, and men – 55%. The respondents were in varied age groups. 62.5% of the respondents aged between 18 and 24 years, whereas 27.5% – between 35 and 50 years. The survey contained the question about the level of education of agritourism owners. Only 7.5% of respondents have primary school, whereas 65% owners received higher education.

The question regarding the length of running the business can be connected with the age of respondents. People who are in the business for a long time constitute 30% of all respondents so almost every third person has the knowledge and management skills to be on the market. Half of the respondents have been on the market for up to 1 year.

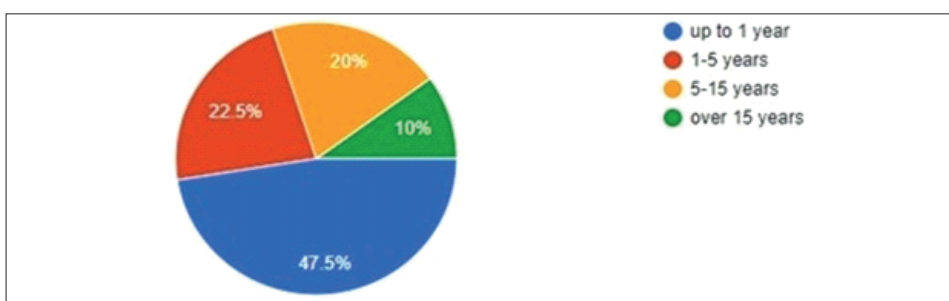


Fig. 1. The length of running business [in %, $N = 60$] (author's own study)

The main cause of the problems for business owners is the COVID-19 pandemic. Such an answer was provided by almost 60% of the respondents. The second reason given by business owners refers to a lack of tourist (25% of responses). Personal problems is the third reason.

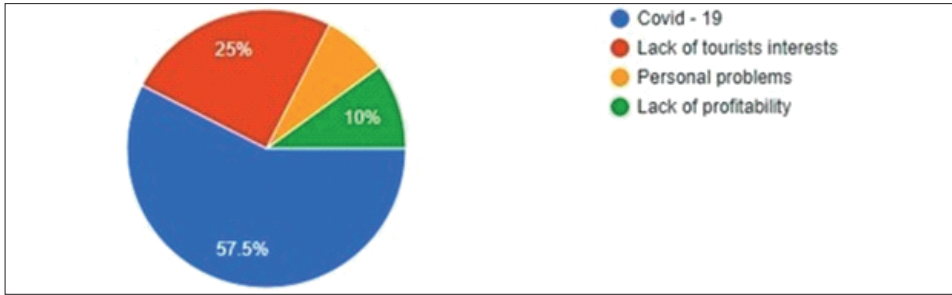


Fig. 2. Causes of the problems in agritourism during the COVID-19 pandemic [in %, $N = 60$] (author's own study)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the respondents indicated financial losses. 93% of all business owners felt financial losses. Almost 8% did not report them.

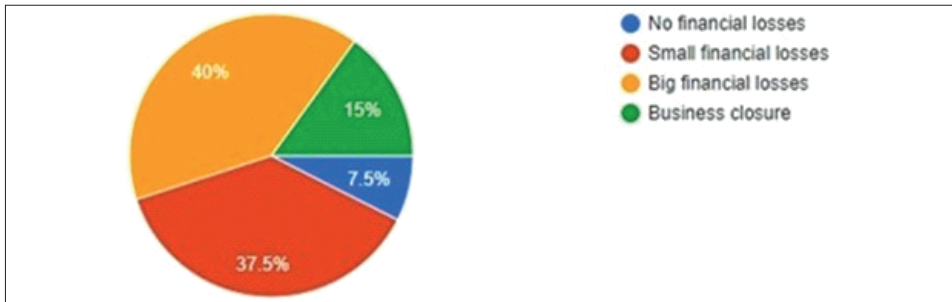


Fig. 3. Financial losses of agritourism owners during the COVID-19 pandemic [in %, $N = 60$] (author's own study)

Agritourism owners did not apply or did not receive government financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only almost 18% of the respondents applied for the government financial support. This could be caused by a lack of registered business activity or limited financial sources provided by government. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost half of the agritourism businesses considered to change either the profile of the business or the form of employment. This has been caused by a lack of customers and a lack of business income. What remains positive is the fact that more than half did not intend to make any changes in business.

The agritourism branch decided to use different types of marketing tools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 63% decided do use social media tools like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to promote their business. Almost 18% decided to use word-of-mouth practice by sharing opinion about products, business and services provided by agritourism owners. The same percentage decided to visit a tourist fair in a stationary or online form and placed advertisements in

local newspapers, radio, TV, etc. 10% of the respondents decided to visit a fair during the COVID-19 pandemic via the Internet.

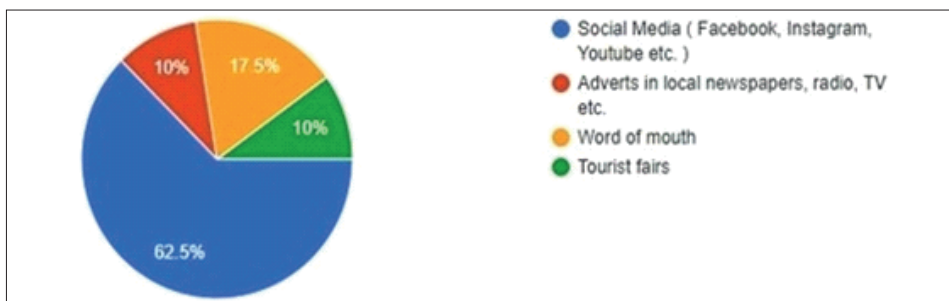


Fig. 4. Type of marketing used to promote during COVID-19 [in %, $N = 60$] (author's own study)

Using marketing helped in 80% of cases to increase interests and attract customers. The advantage of agritourism is regional attractiveness and using it to promote and increase the interest of potential customers. Almost 88% of the respondents declared that regional attractions helped them to attract potential visitors.

The thesis put forward at the beginning of the article was confirmed based on small and limited research trials and can only be an overview of global trends but not always overlapping with them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a deep crisis due to the strict preventive measures taken by national governments, causing an immediate economic downturn and, consequently, a severe collapse of tourism demand (Zawadka et al. 2022). Almost 58% of the respondents declared that the main cause of the problems in agritourism was COVID-19.

In times of the pandemic crisis, the profitability of running a tourism business is significant to any owner. If running an agritourism farm is not profitable, the owner may decide to close his business, which is often the case in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic (Oppermann 1996). In the researches, 15% of the respondents closed their businesses and 77% of interviewed had serious financial problems caused by COVID-19. A common pattern of tourism revenue loss caused by the decline of international tourist arrivals has also been discovered, which suggests that global tourism economy is still fragile against the pandemic (Chin, Dato Musa 2021).

The high amount of social media users can be a major advantage for the agritourism farms because it allows their promotion efforts to reach a larger

audience, thus, increasing the efficacy of Instagram as a marketing tool during the pandemic (Chin, Dato Musa 2021). Almost 63% of survey respondents used social media as the main source of promoting their businesses. Many tourist service providers are likely to disappear (Vaishar, Šťastná 2020). 48% of survey respondents consider changing either the type of business or employment.

Based on the conducted survey, the following conclusions have been reached:

- about 60% of the respondents said that COVID-19 caused some problems in the business,
- 40% of the respondents have achieved high financial losses,
- only around 18% of the respondents have benefited from financial support provided by government and local authorities,
- about half of the respondents assume a change in the business profile,
- 63% of the respondents use or used social media in marketing,
- 80% of the respondents have received more interest after using marketing tools,
- almost 90% of the respondents declared the regional attractions helped to promote the business on the market.

The study has its limitations, namely limited access to the owners of agritourism farms. Based on the information provided, only some facts regarding to the COVID-19 pandemic could be pointed out. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing, further research in this matter should be carried out to learn about the upcoming trends in agritourism.

REFERENCES

Literature

- Adom D., Adu-Mensah J., Sekyere, P.A. 2020. Hand-to-Mouth Work Culture and the COVID-19 Lockdown Restrictions: Experiences of Selected Informal Sector Workers in Kumasi, Ghana. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities* 1(2), 45–64.
- Adom D., Alimov A., Gouthami V. 2021. Agritourism as a Preferred Travelling Trend in Boosting Rural Economies in the Post-COVID-19 Period: Nexus Between Agriculture, Tourism, Art and Culture. *Journal of Migration, Culture and Society* 1(1), 7–19.
- Anguera-Torrell O., Vives-Perez J., Aznar-Alarcon J.P. 2021. Urban Tourism Performance Index over the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Tourism Cities* 7(3), 565–582. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-09-2020-0206>
- Bhatta K., Ohe, Y. 2020. A Review of Quantitative Studies in Agritourism: The Implications for Developing Countries. *Tourism and Hospitality* 1, 23–40.
- Chin W.L., Pehin Dato Musa S.F. 2021. Agritourism Resilience against Covid-19: Impacts and Management Strategies. *Cogent Social Sciences* 7(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1950290>
- Gössling S., Scott D., Hall C.M. 2021. Pandemics, Tourism and Global Change: A Rapid Assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 29(1), 1–20.

- Li Z., Zhang X., Yang K., Singer R., Cui R. 2021. Urban and Rural Tourism under COVID-19 in China: Research on the Recovery Measures and Tourism Development. *Tourism Review* 76(4), 718–736. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-08-2020-0357>
- Magno F., Cassia F. 2021. Effects of Agritourism Businesses Strategies to Cope with the COVID-19 Crisis: The Key Role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Behaviours. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 325, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2021.129292>
- Oppermann, M. 1996. Rural Tourism in Southern Germany. *Annals of Tourism Research* 23(1), 86–102.
- Petromana I., Vargaa M., Constantinb E.C., Petromana C., Momira B., Turca B., Mercea I. 2016. Agritourism: An Educational Tool for the Students with Agro-Food Profile. *Procedia. Economics and Finance* 39, 83–87.
- Polukhina A., Sheresheva M., Efremova M., Suranova O., Agalakova O., Antonov-Ovseenko A. 2021. The Concept of Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in the Face of Covid-19 Crisis: Evidence from Russia. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 14(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm14010038>
- Privitera D. 2010. *The Importance of Organic Agriculture in Tourism Rural*. Applied Studies in Agribusiness and Commerce – APSTRACT. Budapest: Agroinform Publishing House.
- Rogerson C.M., Rogerson J.M. 2021. COVID-19 and Changing Tourism Demand: Research Review and Policy Implications for South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* 10(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720-83>
- Roman M., Grudzień P. 2021. The Essence of Agritourism and Its Profitability During Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. *Agriculture* 11, 458, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture11050458>
- Sadowski A., Wojcieszak M.M. 2019. Geographic Differentiation of Agritourism Activities in Poland vs. Cultural and Natural Attractiveness of Destinations at District Level. *PLoS ONE* 14.
- Vaishar A., Šťastná M. 2020. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Tourism in Czechia. Preliminary Considerations. *Current Issues in Tourism* 25(2), 187–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1839027>
- Williams A.M., Baláz V. 2013. Tourism, Risk Tolerance and Competences: Travel Organization and Tourism Hazards. *Tourism Management* 35, 209–221.
- Wojcieszak-Zbierska M.M., Jęczyk A.J., Zawadka J., Uglis, J. 2020. Agritourism in the Era of the Coronavirus (COVID-19): A Rapid Assessment from Poland. *Agriculture* 10(397), 1–19. <https://doi:10.3390/agriculture10090397>
- Zawadka J., Jęczyk A., Wojcieszak-Zbierska M.M., Niedbała G., Uglis J., Pietrzak-Zawadka J. 2022. Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Agritourism Farm Stays, and Their Safety During COVID-19 Pandemic: Evidence from Poland. *Sustainability* 14(3526), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14063526>
- Zawadka, J. 2019. Agritourism as a Way of Spending Free Time of Urban Families with Children. *Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu* 21(3), 532–541.
- Zhu H., Deng F. 2020. How to Influence Rural Tourism Intention by Risk Knowledge During Covid-19 Containment in China: Mediating Role of Risk Perception and Attitude. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17(10), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17103514>

Netography

- GlobalWebIndex Coronavirus Research. Series Two: Travel & Commuting. WARC COVID-19 Series, March 2020. Online: <https://www.warc.com/content/paywall/article/arfw/globalwebindex-coronavirusresearch-series-two-travel--commuting/132138> (access: 28.03.2022).