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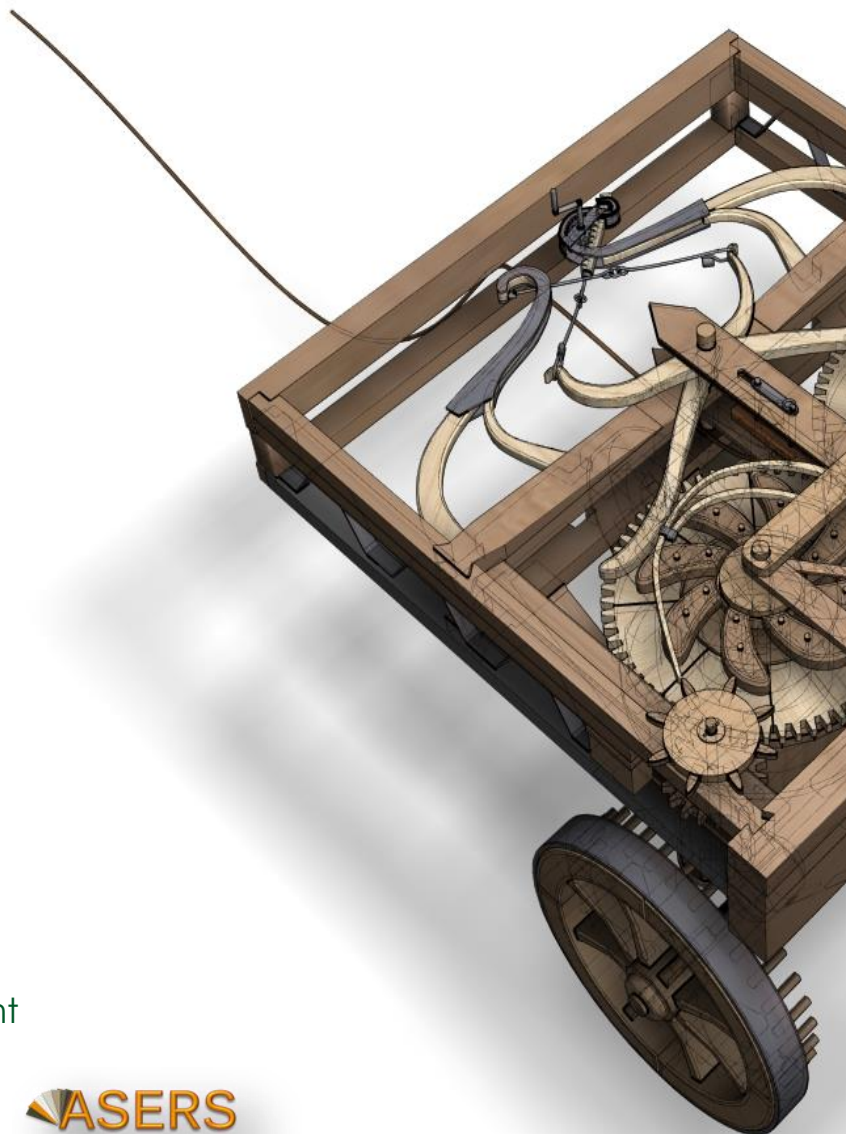
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Contents:

1	Development of Biodegradable Municipal Waste Separate Collection System in Ukraine to Fulfill the Requirements of the European Union Directives ...361
	Tetiana SHEVCHENKO, Inna KOBLIANSKA, Liudmyla SAHER
2	Threshold Effects of Energy Consumption on Economic Growth in Turkey ...370
	Celil AYDIN, Ömer ESEN
3	Influence of Pricing Factor Dimension on the Cadastral Cost of Urban Land Plot ...383
	Ekaterina Aleksandrovna PRAVDINA, Olga Jurjevna LEPIKHINA
4	International Legal Status of the Arctic ...393
	Aleksandr Vasilyevich KUZNETCOV
5	Social and Ecological Risks of the Petrochemical Industry Development ...399
	Olga Ivanovna GABDULHAKOVA, Angelina Viktorovna LUKYANOVA, Irina Ivanovna STRATILATOVA
6	Conflicts Management in Natural Resources Use and Environment Protection on the Regional Level ...407
	Andrey NOVOSELOV, Ivan POTRAVNII, Irina NOVOSELOVA, Violetta GASSIY
7	Scientific-Theoretical Aspects of the Efficient Development of Land Relations in the Agrarian Sector of Economy ...416
	Aida Mazhidovna DAUZOVA
8	State Regulation of Organic Agriculture Development ...429
	Tatyana Mihailovna POLUSHKINA, Yulia Alekseevna AKIMOVA, Svetlana Andreevna KOCHETKOVA
9	Realization of Breakthrough Positioning Strategy for Agritourist Objects ...430
	Vadim Yu. PASHKUS, Natalie A. PASHKUS, Tatiana S. KRASNIKOVA, Margaret V. PASHKUS
10	Economic Security in Conditions of Uncertainty ...449
	Anna V. ORLOVA, Julia V. LYSHCHIKOVA, Yevgenia V. NIKULIN, Yevgeny I. ANOKHIN
11	Theoretical and Methodological Bases of the Multicriteria Sustainability Assessment of the Regional Socioeconomic Systems Development ...458
	Olga Ivanovna SHATALOVA, Natalia Nikolaevna TELNOVA, Anatoly Kuzmich KOBOZEV, Mikhail Anatolyevich KOBOZEV, Elena Alekseeva VOROBYEVA, Evgeny Vladimirovich SHEKHOVTSOV

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- 12 **The Relationship between the Tourism Sector and Local Economic Development (LED): The Case of the Vaal Triangle Region, South Africa** ...466
Daniel Francois MEYER, Natanya MEYER
- 13 **Concept and Procedures of Crisis Management in Russian Hotel Enterprises** ...475
Andrey Pavlovich KOVALTCHUK, Elena Aleksandrovna DEDUSENKO, Ekaterina Arturovna BLINOVA, Konstantin Aleksandrovich MILORADOV
- 14 **Ecotourism is a Significant Tool for Sustainable Tourist Attraction: A Case Study of Khao Krajome, Ratchaburi Province, Thailand** ...481
Patthawan LERDSUCHATAVANICH, Art-ong PRADATSUNDARASAR, Sura PATTANAKIAT, Tatsanawalai UTARASAKUL
- 15 **Improvement Options for Transactional Factors of Tourism and Recreation Cluster in Volgograd Region** ...493
Olga Vladimirovna FETISOVA, Vladimir Victorovich KURCHENKOV, Elena Sergeevna MATINA
- 16 **Mega Sporting Events and Air Pollution: The Case of the Super Bowl** ...504
Carlos G. SILVA, Comfort F. RICKETTS
- 17 **Local People's Perception regarding Tourism Development: The Case of Yogyakarta, Indonesia** ...512
Roozbeh Babolian HENDIJANI, Yuliana
- 18 **Analysis of Tourism Cluster Development: Kazakhstan Experience** ...519
Aliya NIYAZBAYEVA, Anar YESSENGELDINA
- 19 **Design of a Spa Resort Micro-Logistical Model** ...526
Jana JABLONSKÁ, Daniela MARASOVÁ, Anna GRINČOVÁ
Gejza M. TIMČÁK
- 20 **Studying the Ways to Reduce the Harmful Effects of Plastic Bottles in Municipal Solid Waste on the Environment in Small Towns** ...540
Zulfiya E. BAYAZITOVA, Sayagul B. ZHAPAROVA, Railya M. MUKHAMADEYEVA, Zhulduz O. TLEUOVA, Lyudmila A. MAKEEVA, Sagintay Z. YELYUBAYEV

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Realization of Breakthrough Positioning Strategy for Agritourist Objects

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Abstract:

This article presents the possibilities and ways of forming an effective strategy to promote agritourism facilities, which as a specific type of tourism product, recently became more popular in the world. This paper analyzes the examples of domestic and foreign practice of promoting agritourism facilities in terms of their accordance with breakthrough positioning tools.

The aim of the article is to examine the perspective directions of development of agritourism in Russia and abroad, and identify the possibility of applying the breakthrough strategy of positioning objects to different types of agritourism.

The methodology of this study is based on breakthrough tools and matrix of strategic positioning algorithms, which include Matrix General Electric–McKinsey (GE–McKinsey). In this paper, a new kind of competitive positioning matrix tools is presented being implemented in four types of market promotion, including generic, kitsch, high-tech and breakthrough. Breakthrough tools for positioning of rural objects and the ways of its application in the field of agritourism are considered. The paper shows the options for positioning objects of rural tourism via the selection of one of the most promising strategies for promoting. Methodology demonstrates the difference between the ratio of winning and losing positions of positioning objects agricultural tourism in choosing different approaches to their promotion.

It is concluded that the development of eco-tourism is a promising direction of modern tourism market positioning and breakthrough strategy is able to provide high attractiveness of agritourism. Application of the breakthrough positioning strategy in the field of agritourism requires taking into account all types of factors and assessment of the winning position based on the characteristics of the chosen promotion strategy.

Keywords: agritourism, area marketing, tourist potential of region, key success factors of territory, strategic marketing.

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1. Introduction

Today we are witnessing a change in the economy and culture, society and way of life. It leads to fundamental changes in people's behavior and the emergence of various kinds of leisure activities. Tourism sector is not an exception: it plays an increasingly important role in the modern world as noted, for example, by Krippendorf (1980), Oppermann (1994), Pike (2008), Jurowski and Olsen (1995). It helps in shaping national identity that was brilliantly illustrated by Clancy (2012), and according to Chang, Backman, and Huang (2014), as well as Tan, Luh, and Kung (2014), it is due to its innovative penetrating approaches and creativity. It can be treated as a relatively new and quite fashionable trend on the global agritourism market. Despite its relative "youth", a significant number of works discussed the topic. Among them there are Western authors: both European Lattanzi (2005) and Ryan, de Bordeaux, MakKellan (2006), and Russian authors like Elagin (2012), Dubinicheva and Sovietova (2009), Shumakova *et al.* (2015) and others. In terms of strategy, agritourism is one of the promising trends of tourism development in Russia, as a large proportion of the country's territory is countryside, currently ignored by tourist flows.

2. Concept and methodology

2.1. Concept of agritourism

It should be noted that in the Russian practice, there is a certain terminological difference in this type of tourism positioning. In particular, Russia extended the concept of "rural tourism", as a variety of recreation in the countryside, involving accommodation and food in a house of a rural family. At the same time, in recent times more common term "agricultural tourism" (or agritourism) was used, which attracts tourists to the already existing farms or agribusiness, where tourists would be able to feel the spirit of village life and work, taking an active part in the agricultural activities of these enterprises.

However, the concept of agritourism is more general. This concept should also include various options for rural tourism. They may involve, as a tourist accommodation in the family, and a living in the so-called agro-hotel, the atmosphere is close to the atmosphere of a rural homestead or country villa situated in the countryside. There are the following special features of rural tourism, as a kind of tourist site positioning:

- tourist visits agribusiness (farm or agro-hotel and can either just go with a short excursion or stay there overnight or longer);
- developing agritourism in existing agribusinesses (farms, hotels) or places imitating rural life, in order to create an additional activity and a source of additional income for them.

Thus, the purpose of visiting agricultural enterprises (farms, agro-hotel) or imitating places can be varied: it is the experience of participation in agricultural activities (from winemaking and milking goats to taking part in cheese making), educational and cognitive goals, tasting natural local products, and simply relaxing.

It seems that agricultural tourism has to play a significant role in creating a competitive environment in Russia. However, in the research on Russian tourism, agritourism, being an important component of the tourism market, isn't even mentioned (Lysikova 2012), and its development is facing a number of problems, a significant proportion of which is the lack of propensity to invest in the development of this area and the lack of the effective promotion and the correct positioning on both the domestic and international market. It should also be noted that the complete indifference of the state for the development of the tourism cluster, the lack of interest from the villagers and employees of the agricultural sector of the economy to create a model of thematic tourism or farms, causing interest among potential tourists, and inability to make this type of holiday popular in Russia. Thus, the direction for the development of agricultural tourism in Russia requires the use of modern marketing tools and the active support from the state and local authorities.

2.2. Breakthrough positioning methodology for agritourism

As rightly pointed by Formica (2000), increasing the number of museums, walking routes and/or accommodations on the territory do not lead to bigger tourist flows, this goal requires active steps in promoting tourism products. A tool that would allow to carry out the effective promotion of the idea of agritourism and to develop a positioning strategy for every attractive agricultural area is a technology of a breakthrough positioning. The breakthrough concept was applied to positioning by Cagan and Vogel (2001) and since then has worked well (Starobinskaya 2007). It can be successfully used for creating a tourist attraction and building a brand of agricultural area or an imitating territory (Kotler *et al.* 1999).

Let us consider prospects of breakthrough positioning technology for promotion and creation of strong Russian brands on the market of agricultural objects or territories imitating agricultural areas. The characteristics of agricultural object are studied in two directions in accordance with this technology. These directions are design (style) of agricultural area (or imitation) and positioning and promotion of area with the help of technology, innovation and original ideas. Matrix positioning map modified from Cagan and Vogel (2001) for the objects will look like this (see Figure 1).

This technology allows a ranking of agricultural sites and imitations depending on presentation attributes and methods of forming the attractiveness of agricultural objects. Thus, at this stage of positioning, those territorial attributes of the brand that can become key success factors are selected.

Market leadership in rural or agricultural tourism is generally ensured by the use of the so-called SET-gap (S – social, E – economic, T – technological factors). The effective use of SET-gap can be achieved in different ways using agricultural areas' distinct approaches to strategic positioning. Thus, the choice of a dominant position will determine the set of SET-factors that need to be developed with the help of selected attributes of the agricultural object.

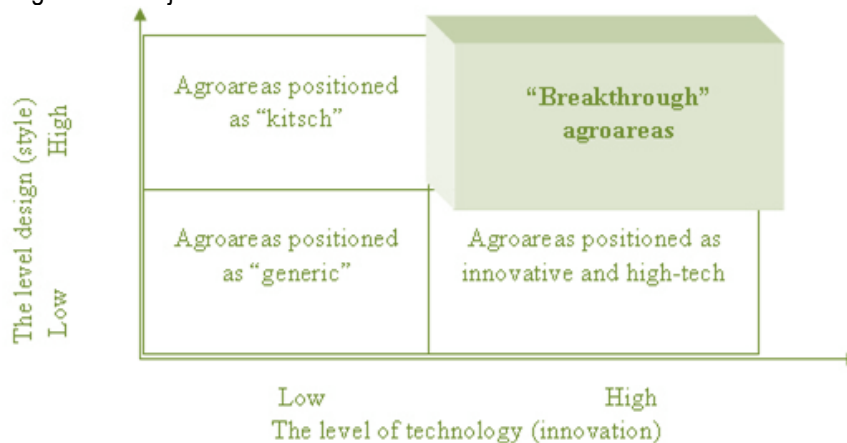


Figure 1 - Modified map of positioning agricultural territory or imitation, based on Cagan and Vogel (2001)

For example, agritourism facilities for generics positioning should be implemented based on the promotion of the social and economic components, while the technological factor is almost negligible. More precisely, for these agricultural areas technological component is usually already well-established and typical for its group.

For the kitsch areas, promotion will be based on the priority of social and technological factors. Here, on the contrary, the economic component has worked in some way, since it is determined by areas belonging to this group. Without high-value agritourism facility for potential customers, it will neither dominate in the global environment, nor will be able to achieve an arbitrarily small degree of fame.

For hi-tech areas, emphasis is laid upon the promotion of the social and economic components, while factor of technology is determined by characteristics of this group. Therefore, it may be less significant later.

For breakthrough, agricultural areas, emphasis should be placed on the economic and technological components, as social factor is the basis of their active marketing strategy. Thus, the social factor provides a "stylistic uniqueness" for a breakthrough object and enables it to stand out in the global environment. However, to achieve a leading position in line with this strategy is possible only through a focus on economic and technological components.

Due to this presentation of the SET-gap characteristics, the use of standard techniques for agricultural areas market positioning, for example, methods of GE - McKinsey, would give a different picture of the dominant representation and losing positions for different types of agricultural objects. Let us consider the positioning of agricultural areas and territories imitating agricultural environment in accordance with the strategic tool for each type of positioning.

3. Results

3.1. Generic territory

The first group of agricultural territories and imitations is positioned as "generics". It is distinguished by a minimum level of design and technological approaches to positioning. Typically, these areas do not have a

strong brand, and probably, do not have any brand. These agricultural areas or imitations may have some specific tourist attractions, and the area in general could provoke some interest, even in the long term, but with such positioning the building of a strong global brand is a difficult task. However, generic agricultural areas can enjoy some level of local or even global popularity. Due to the correct positioning of the important attributes of the area, local brands can be successfully built and can attract large tourist flows, investment and attention from certain categories of tourists. For the generic objects of agritourism areas, winners and intermediates can be interpreted as follows (see Figure 2).

For generic agricultural territories, the indicators of competitiveness and attractiveness of the object will take into account its social and economic orientation. For these areas, the position corresponding to the winner #1 of McKinsey Matrix can be called a “star” by analogy with the matrix of Boston Consulting Group (BCG). This position corresponds to territory’s leadership in the global environment achieved by typization of main attractive factors of the object and creating comfortable environment for potential tourists. These objects are *ceteris paribus* more interesting, more convenient and cheaper to come and invest in this agricultural object.

For instance, Greek village of Afytos and Karelian Kinerma have gained the position of generic leaders. “Cash cow” is a good option for developing a strategy in order to promote this type of agricultural tourism facilities, due to possibility to use it for long-term stay and visit for consumers with more conservative preferences. This type of market position replaces the winner #3 in the classical McKinsey Matrix.

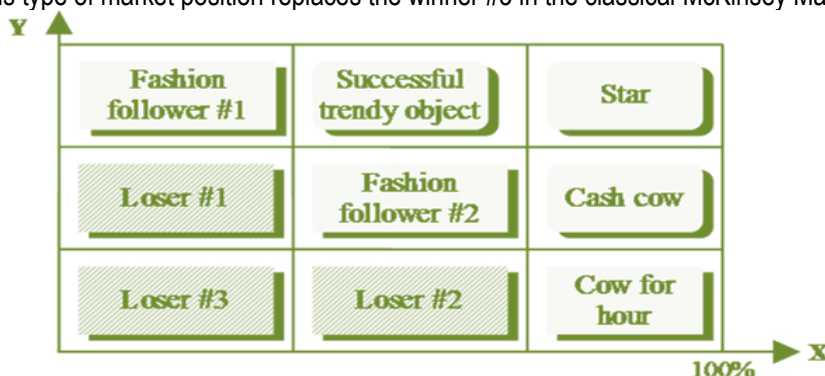


Figure 2 - Matrix of positioning generic agricultural territories via breakthrough positioning strategy

The choice of “successful trendy object” as the market position suggests that agritourism facility is able to fit into the existing strong trend. The position will provide leadership by lowering tourist’s costs of information and visits to agricultural object until there is a demand following the main trend. An example of little-known even in Russia place with mysterious reputation is Nebyvaloe (“something that wasn’t”) village in Vladimir region. Such an interest to the object of agritourism with no infrastructure can be explained by its name being associated with something non-existent, a place that cannot be or where you can disappear. Nebyvaloe has created a kind of online fashion, caused by the spread of the initiative of information about the place through the media Forth square and Swarm, Instagram, YouTube or social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. And despite the fact that there are no objects of tourist attraction there, as recognized by the authors of blogs and unrealistic reports, you can feel the atmosphere of a rural Russia, a kind of spirit of the Russian countryside forgotten, savage and drunk”.

The position “cow for hour” suggests that the area is visited through force of habit, but the attractiveness of the agricultural object is short-lived and it stops it from achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. For a while, objects of such territories are able to generate income, as the “cash cow” type does, but the income derived from them will exceed the costs on the development and promotion only for a short time. “Fashion follower” is focused on cost-effectiveness for consumers visiting a rural tourism facility or place of residence in the agricultural areas and has got into the current fashion trend. However, the position of such areas is as stable as the fashion they follow. The position of the first one is slightly better, but the appeal of either of these areas can only be sustained for a short time.

However, the return on investments for generics agricultural areas can be quite high, if the investor considers the possibility of using the successful long-term environmental factors, consumer preferences, or copying the ideas of the development of agricultural areas.

3.2. Hi-tech territory

Agricultural territory positioned with focus on agricultural technologies and innovations in food mini-industrial enterprise and innovation component of agricultural farms can be classified as “hi-tech” or “innovative”. Agricultural technology and innovation are determining factors for agricultural areas’ identity, a big step forward and may even be the basis of their brand attributes. Style, is not used as an additional attribute for promotion of these agricultural areas. For high-tech agro-tourist facilities matrix positioning is slightly different (see Figure 3).

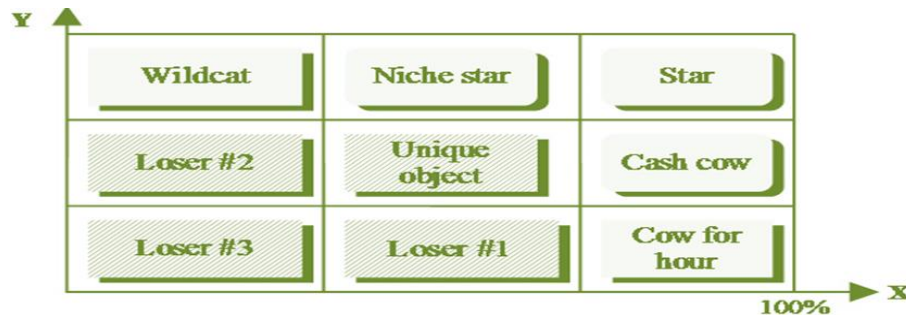


Figure 3 - Matrix of positioning hi-tech agritourism facilities via breakthrough positioning technology

For these agricultural areas, high level of development of agricultural technologies is the determining factor, so with the right technology and innovative positioning of the areas and the choice of its main target audience, it is able to take a leading position in the global environment among other innovative farms. These well positioned agritourism farms are consistently the stage of “wildcats” and “niche star” and as a result are able to achieve a leading position and become a sustainable innovation, “star”, demonstration farm, such as the arboretum established by Biolit company.

“Wildcat” in this interpretation, as well as similar agritourist facilities in the BCG matrix, is the invader of resources. These agro-facilities require huge promotion costs and various promotional activities, promoting the technology and manufacturing of local products and promoting recreation, training and familiarizing with rural life. At the same time, the results of these activities at the stage of promoting a rural tourism facility and its agricultural products are unclear and consequently high investment risks. If the selected promotion strategy is successful, the “wildcat” can become a “niche star”.

In the case of high-tech agricultural areas, young star is corresponding to the leading position, but the high cost of maintaining the facility will be leadership in the tourism sector, which needs agribusiness to be able to meet to the maximum extent. In the case where the agritourism object can create and lead a global brand in the field of agricultural technology, it will become a “star” in the classic sense, and will be more attractive to investors, and all agritourism groups will seek to visit a unique property.

Held the star attraction at lower agricultural areas and weakening of attention to agricultural technology and innovative farming methods can provide a transition to the position of the “cash cow”, which will be over a period of areas bring stable profit that exceeds the cost of its maintenance. In fact, “cash cow” for the high-tech agritourist areas is a niche position. These agritourism areas are visited and receive investment in accordance with the perceived value of its technological differences in agricultural practices. Investments in such areas are very selective.

“Cow for hour” is following the leader in the field of agricultural technology at the time of waning attractiveness of the leader, it is, copied strategy of the leader at a time when it is not completely certain. In this case, an object of agritourism uses good ideas and does not spend efforts to create its own identity, copying the strategy of the leader, with unstable position. In this position, an agritourism object can bring its creators and investors a reasonable profit for a not very long period, as the attractiveness of the selected attributes of agricultural innovations has fallen dramatically

However, these agritourism facilities can be successfully positioned as generics or kitsch, which is a novelty in the attributes of agricultural technology, but it is only imaginary novelty. In this case, positioning can be much more successful, and can be secured in long term.

Agricultural areas falling in at least two positions (unique object and the loser #2) can be quite an interesting case: from hi-tech areas by copying an effective leadership strategy, they can go on a winning position as generics or kitsch.

Hi-tech agritourism facilities are well represented in the Netherlands and Austria, where this type of tourism is developed well enough: tourists are invited to visit the unique agritourism companies and can participate in the creation of agricultural products with the latest technology used at the farm.

There are several well-known dairies in the Netherlands that can familiarize visitors with both the history of cheese making and traditional technologies, as well as with latest innovative technologies in Dutch cheese production. It is possible to taste and buy local products, to attend cheese-making training for adults and children in these agribusinesses. The money from agritourism is not a major source of income, mainly because they earn from the sale of cheese and other agricultural products, but the income from accommodation and visiting tourists provide an opportunity for sustainable development in the long term.

There is an example of a winery in Austria. There, tourists can participate in various stages of the production cycle of wine: gathering and processing of grapes. It is also possible to take part in activities related to the evaluation of grapes and selection. In general, it can be concluded that the orientation exclusively on the territory and the creation of agritourism facilities for the local attraction or even for a limited global attraction of such objects, generic objects and innovative objects are not able to provide long-term development of the area. Thus, such positioning of agricultural areas cannot create a steady inflow of tourists attending the agricultural site with its facilities and stay for a vacation in their property. On the other hand, positioning of areas in other clusters of breakthrough positioning matrix rarely manages to create an object that has a distinct agricultural orientation without further specialization in entertainment, historical and ethnographic education or local history and culture.

3.3. Kitsch territory

Agro territory “kitsch” as opposed to technologically oriented at promoting a high level of style and design. These objects of agritourism have a focus on the allegorical, semantic component of perception. As a rule, they are focused on premium-class travelers who want to join a particular fashion trend or a peculiar peasant luxury. For agro objects of “kitsch” matrix, positioning will be slightly different (see Figure 4).

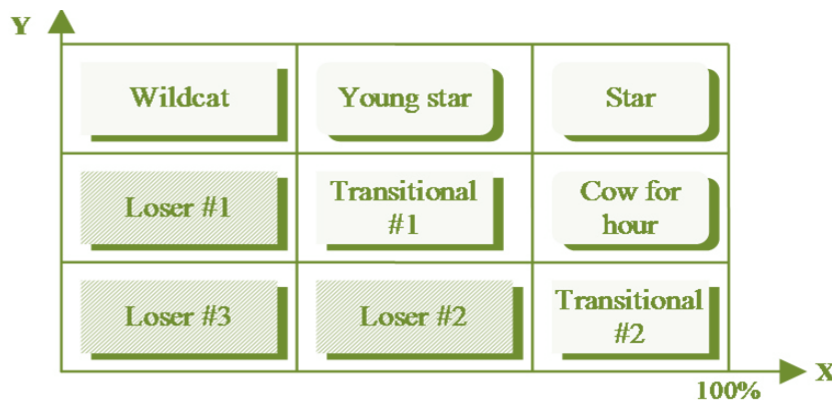


Figure 4 - Matrix of positioning kitsch agricultural objects, via breakthrough positioning strategy

“Wildcat” for this group is the agricultural enterprise; its idea has already been formed and all the prerequisites for the development are available, while the promotion and development has not yet been implemented. These agritourism facilities have no pronounced uniqueness in use of agricultural technology, but the novelty of the concept lies in the presentation of agricultural enterprises as exclusive and unique. These agritourism objects will be presented in non-typical ways. Investment in such projects can be highly profitable; however, it is possible only for a short term.

If the idea to promote the areas works, it can become a “young star”. It starts to lead in a certain segment of the market of agritourism and as a result it has a certain number of fans. If the object becomes popular with audience, interested in rural getaway, and it is able to become a leader of opinion, it has the potential to become a classic star. When such a star is losing its market appeal, it is virtually impossible to secure its position on the market of agritourism. Too many agricultural areas had been fashionable before they lost their appeal and for the majority of potential customers they have become simply places without expressed agricultural attractive differences.

Many agricultural areas aspiring to leadership are adopting a kitsch leader strategy. As the result of successful use of this strategy, there is a “cow for hour” agritourism object that is able to generate income for a short term. “Cow for hour” is aiming for a slightly different audience, but with the same idea its true prosperity

in this position is fleeting. For example, not a farm of ostriches but a muskrat farm, not in the Leningrad Region but in the Altai.

In case of further loss of market attractiveness and competitive status of agritourism kitsch, the object falls into the class of “transition”, being unstable. These agricultural enterprises need a new marketing ideas or a significant correction of the image. Position “transitional #1” is slightly better due to the higher attractiveness of the object, while the “transition #2” already requires new ideas in order to progress. If these agricultural areas are unable to advance in leadership, they will go to the losers. That is the absolute collapse of part of their idea of agritourism.

Shuvalovka village, built in the suburbs of St. Petersburg between Strelina and Peterhof, is an example of unsuccessful kitsch object of rural tourism. This object was intended to become an agricultural and ethnographic complex providing experience of life in Russian villages, folk crafts, learn about how to care for the animals, as well as learn how to make pottery and forged products, leather and fabric. There is a hotel “Koshel” (Pouch) on the territory where people can live in a stylized wooden tower, bathe in a Russian sauna or *banya*, enjoy traditional Russian culture and rural life. However, the project was too expensive and, in addition, the management of agricultural object, seeking to maximize the benefits from its use, has implemented unwise marketing strategy that making the promising artists leaves the project. The project lost people who already had a shared experience in events and festivals management. As a result, the popularity of the object plummeted. Currently, the object is positioned as a generic and is losing its focus on agritourism being rather weak in the category of classic tourist sites.

It is important to note that for the kitsch territories, as well as for the hi-tech areas, the use of tools of experiential marketing is quite common (Chesnokova and Kirillovskaya 2015). Often, the promotion of the territory as a kitsch requires considerable effort in order to create a strong cultural brand, for example, through the active use of the art facilities and the development of the art market (Pashkus 2014). Ranking as the kitsch on the one hand takes a lot of efforts to create an image (usually on the basis of imagined differences) that perfectly fits into the vector of development of the New Economy, service-based economy with emphasis on intangible assets and symbolic values (Babicheva 2015), but it is fraught with “devaluation” as a consequence of the adverse selection (Bulina 2014).

3.4. Breakthrough territory

The combination of technological, innovative, creative and style characteristic leads to maximization of “breakthrough” position for agricultural areas. These areas create extra value for consumers and investors thus making the territory highly popular and highly attractive.

In principle, it is possible that such a breakthrough position was realized under the influence of historic development and the specific circumstances surrounding the positioning of objects, but more often such positioning is carefully planned. It should be noted that the breakthrough of the territorial positioning of objects is very rarely used solely for their agritourism orientation; often agritourism is just one of the promising components in breakthrough positioning of the territory. When breakthrough positioning heavily depends on cultural component it can bring significant revenues and can lead to an increase in image, despite all the problems of cultural development in the market environment (Rybakov 1992, Throsby 2001). The matrix for breakthrough agricultural objects is different from those already discussed (see Figure 5).

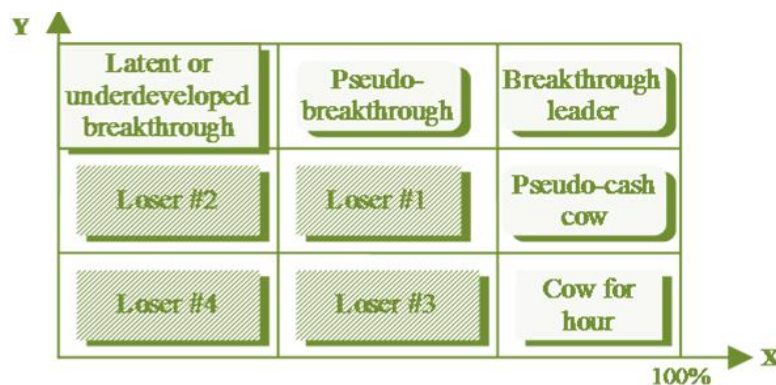


Figure 5 - Matrix of breakthrough positioning agricultural objects

The difference is that unlike all other matrices this one has more losing position even for relatively successful positions within other strategies. Thus, a breakthrough positioning in a breakthrough cluster is riskier. Agricultural enterprises, seeking to create a breakthrough agritourism object while being unable to close the SET-gap, are absolute failure on the agritourism market.

The position of “wildcat” in this case is replaced by “latent or underdeveloped breakthrough”. It means the presence of a breakthrough idea and the social demand for this agricultural technology and, in principle; it is possible that a wrong breakthrough idea was selected.

If the idea was worthy, then agricultural area can become a “breakdown leader”. But it will happen only with the complete closure of the SET - gap. With certain weaknesses, the area could become a “pseudo-breakthrough”. Pseudo innovative areas lack originality in the technological processes and cannot ensure the SET - gap in all three areas.

The weakening of the attractiveness of a breakthrough facility will mean a transition to “pseudo-cash cow” that appears to be highly attractive too, but actually keeping them at a high level requires permanently high costs. Thus, these agritourism objects bring much less significant revenues to their regions, but they left to compete for the tourists with other attractive areas. These costs can not be easily justified. “Cows for hour” agritourism facilities are competitors that are trying to follow promotion strategy on the market that is becoming less relevant. So, the exploitation of this position is short-term and not very effective.

French territory of Alsace is an excellent example of breakthrough positioning. This region is a prime example of effective public investments in the postwar crisis period. The region was developing in accordance with the state doctrine of revival of national traditions and the formation of a tourist attraction. On the one hand, the regional territorial objects are promoted through the expression of national identity, traditions and uniqueness, on the other hand, the region is a playground for developing the most advanced food technologies and technologies of agriculture, as well as development of modern infrastructure. It makes the region comfortable and attractive both for life and for leisure.

The region skillfully uses its geographic location and climatic conditions. It is located on the famous wine route in Europe; the region specializes in the production of exclusive wines in small lots at relatively low prices, which is made possible by modern innovative technologies. The region offers the most comfortable conditions for agricultural tourists' consumption of wine and other household products. Homelike hotels with a small number of rooms are available, where tourists can stay to quietly meet with the production of traditional products, try different wines and eat local foods. The best-known objects in this class are the villages and small towns of Eguisheim, Ribeauvillé, Riquewihr, Turckheim, Kaysersberg and Niedermorschwihr. Probably, division in this case is based on the historical features of the places.

Moreover, all these territories have not only expressed agritourism specialization, but also were positioned as cultural and tourist centers. All these places have concentrated a large share of historic half-timbered houses and other historic buildings. There are no unique pieces of architecture among these buildings, but they are interested for tourists due to its age, methods of construction and its esthetics. They are cute and coupled with decorative ornament of houses and streets it creates a unique atmosphere of a medieval fairy tale. Thus, agricultural specialization adds to historic and cultural tourist centers making them more attractive. It allows gaining an additional segment of the tourism market and at the same time creates a market for local agricultural products, part of which is used for the French food industry. As a result, Alsatian towns and villages were turned into shopping centers specialized in local traditional products.

4. Discussion

The use of breakthrough positioning strategy and modified GE-McKinsey matrix for the promotion of the agritourism territory clearly shows the possibility of considered decision about choosing a successful strategy for promoting an agricultural territory. Although this can be implemented as a tool for evaluating potential general strategies depending on supposed position and promotion strategies, it needs to be developed further. The possible directions are the following.

Firstly, because the model is based on qualitative analysis, it can be sometimes problematic to establish the position inside the matrix precisely. It may be even harder for the intermediate positions. Moreover, there is a difficulty in following the trajectory of the territory inside the matrix, especially with the slow rate of changes.

Secondly, the questions about calibrating the model for heterogeneous objects with various key factors of success arise. There are combinations of technological or cultural factors so that the object can find itself in different positions in matrix based on Cagan and Vogel (2001) depending on the country or region.

Another point is that it is not efficient to choose financial strategies and promotional tools solely on the basis of description of several successful (or unsuccessful) cases.

Finally, the presented model is treating the agritourism object as a homogenous entity in the eye of its target audience. While the perceived quality is the basis of the analysis, there is a possibility of differences in perception among various groups. It can lead to the reevaluation of the strategy. Further research of these and other questions can help to make the model more adaptable and useful for agritourism positioning. It can also help in developing an algorithm capable to evaluate and rate agritourism objects in order to choose the best positioning strategy.

Conclusion

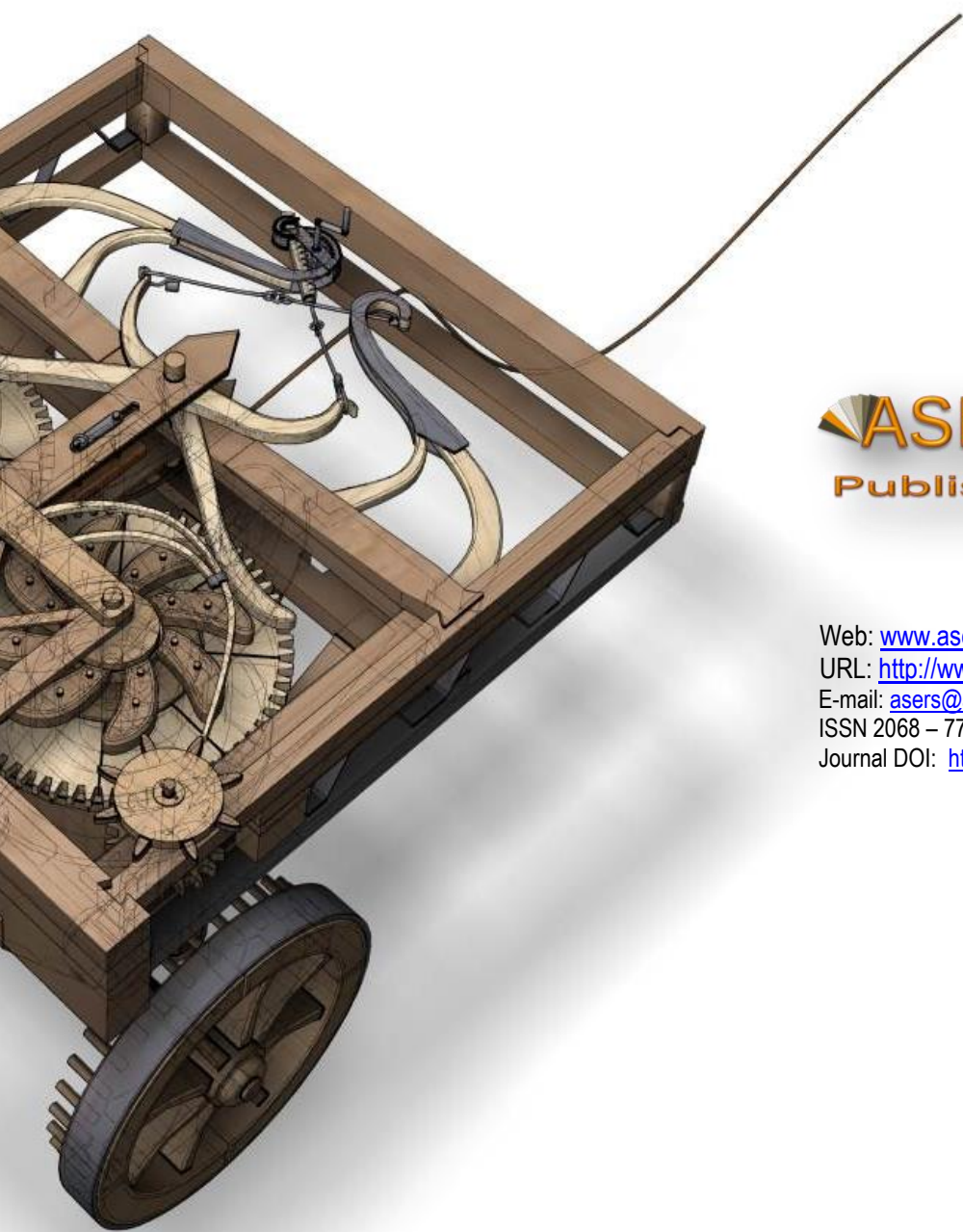
In general, approaches to creating attractive agriculturally oriented area or separate agricultural enterprises were analyzed above. It may be concluded that the implementation strategy of breakthrough positioning for this type of objects is only possible as the result of combination with territory's socially demanded attributes. In this case, the successful positioning of the breakthrough territory or kitsch positioning can be realized for agricultural area via agritourism positioning combined with historical, cultural, ecological and other specializations of the area. Positioning only as an object of agritourism breakthrough or a kitsch fashion object is riskier and requires a creative idea. The development of the agritourism with the use of the strategy of promoting generic or hi-tech does not usually bring more tourists, but it is able to ensure the sustainable development of agricultural areas and create an additional source of income in the long term. With the right approach this type of tourism can be in demand in Russia and will play a role in rural development of the Russian regions.

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