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CUSTOMER'S WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR AGRITOURISM PRODUCTS

The primary purpose of the paper is to provide market information for rural tourism enterprises or family agritourism businesses about the actual willingness to pay (WTP) and to examine customers' characteristics affecting it. The study investigates the influence of demographic features on consumer's WTP and identifies differences in WTP between consumers with high and low income levels. The comparative analysis conducted is based on the independent samples T-test.

Keywords: willingness to pay; agritourism products; urban and rural customers; Kazakhstan.

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ГОТОВНІСТЬ СПОЖИВАЧА ПЛАТИТИ ЗА АГРОТУРИСТИЧНИЙ ПРОДУКТ

У статті доведено, що основними завданнями дослідження є надання маркетинговій інформації для родинного бізнесу або туроператорів, що функціонують на сільських територіях, щодо готовності споживачів платити (ГСП), а також вивчення впливу характеристик споживачів на ГСП. Проаналізовано вплив демографічних особливостей на ГСП, визначено відмінності в ГСП між споживачами з високим і низьким рівнями доходу. Порівняльний аналіз проведено на основі критерію Стьюдента для незалежної вибірки.

Ключові слова: готовність платити; агротуристичний продукт; міські і сільські споживачі; Казахстан.

Табл. 4. Рис. 1. Літ. 24.

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ГОТОВНОСТЬ ПОТРЕБИТЕЛЯ ПЛАТИТЬ ЗА АГРОТУРИСТИЧЕСКИЙ ПРОДУКТ

В статье обосновано, что основными задачами исследования являются предоставление маркетинговой информации для семейного бизнеса или туроператоров, функционирующих на сельских территориях, относительно готовности потребителей платить (ГПП), а также изучение влияния характеристик потребителей на ГПП. Проанализировано влияние демографических особенностей на ГПП и определены различия в ГПП между потребителями с высоким и низким уровнем дохода. Сравнительный анализ проведен на основе критерия Стьюдента для независимой выборки.

Ключевые слова: готовность платить; агротуристический продукт; городские и сельские потребители; Казахстан.

Introduction. The level of awareness on customers' willingness to pay is significantly important in agritourism marketing, especially in product differentiation and developing a price strategy. As applied to agritourism the willingness to pay is considered as maximum price a consumer is ready to pay for agritourism products (Smith and Nagle, 2002). However, many companies usually do not pay due regards to the role of willingness to pay during the process of implementing their pricing decisions. For instance, Breidert, Hahsler and Reutterer (2006) state that "only 8 to 15% of all companies develop pricing strategies based on likely buyer response behavior." Due to the lack of understanding consumer's willingness to pay companies face a problem in terms of gaining competitive advantage through pricing policies. Efficient pricing

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strategy leads to better demand management. Establishing prices, that in a relevant way reflect willingness to pay of target consumers, helps to enhance competitiveness and potential profit (Wedgwood and Sansom, 2003).

There seems to be limited research on the purchase intention of agritourism products (Zhu and Wu, 2012). In this regard, the paper aims to explore how demographic characteristics such as the level of income and living area affect the willingness to pay. Thus, we contribute to expanding the knowledge on purchase intention in agritourism. Moreover, investigating customers' willingness to pay for agritourism products in Kazakhstan, the current research fills in a gap in tourism research.

Literature Review on Agritourism Products and Factors Affecting Pricing in the field. Agritourism is a form of sustainable tourism which has been globally recognized as a strategy of rural development and agricultural diversification (Wicks and Merrett, 2003; Sonnino, 2004; Arroyo, Barbieri and Rich, 2013). Being the innovative form of tourism business agritourism provides a wide range of services. Relying on the theory developed by Sznajder et al. (2009) it is generally assumed that agritourism products and services are classified according to specific criteria. The first criterion is closely associated with seasonality context, while the second one is related to the group of services and products in agritourism offerings. Depending on the seasonal character products and services in agritourism are divided into two groups, such as constantly and seasonally available offers. Since constantly available products and services do not depend on weather conditions they can be offered all year round. However, a considerable part of agritourism products and services are temporary offers having a seasonal character. In comparison with agritourism offerings available during the whole year temporary services are quite expensive.

Sznajder et al. (2009) argue that in many countries with well-developed tourism industry tourism services are provided all year round. For instance, recreational services on the Mediterranean islands are usually provided continuously during the whole year, thus prices are relatively not high. Despite this, there is an interesting fact here, in some countries prices for temporary agritourism services are relatively low instead of being high as usual. Such kind of situation depends on how agritourism is perceived. At the initial stage of development agritourism is perceived as a cost effective business that is why prices for all forms of agri-recreation are lower than for other tourism forms. This is also the result of the aim to attract more tourists. However, the increasing demand for tourism within natural and rural context can significantly change the character of agritourism. Various VIP services in agritourism can also impact the prices. In the near future it is projected that the prices for agritourism offers will be becoming higher and higher (Sznajder et al., 2009). Based on this, the factors affecting pricing in agritourism can be summarized as follow:

- seasonality;
- increasing demand for rural recreation;
- expanding assortment of agriproducts.

Agritourism offers a diversity of products and gives an opportunity to vary agritourism offerings from the basic to VIP services. Depending on the resource conditions it allows creating different agritourism services able to satisfy the needs of different tourist segments, simultaneously establishing a relevant pricing policy varied from the cheapest to the most expensive.

Carpio, Wohlgenant and Boonsaeng (2008: 255) identify agritourism as "visits to farm, ranches, and other agricultural settings with recreational purposes. It may include farm stays, pick-your-own produce, children's educational programs, petting zoos, on farm fishing, hunting". On the other hand, agritourism can be considered as a unique form of tourism which creates a market opportunity for retail trade in rural areas. Due to direct sales not only farmers and households providing agritourism services, but also rural community and small local enterprises take an opportunity to realize farm goods. Thereby, it helps to create the so-called rural retail networks and satisfies the increasing demand of consumers in terms of organic products (Sznajder et al., 2009). Offerings related to direct farm sales as an important agritourism service is provided especially for agritourists while accommodating them in a farm. Agritourists according to their needs can buy various kinds of vegetables, fruits and animal products. With reference to pick-your-own type sales, it is usually organized by agritourism providers during harvesting periods to enable agritourists to enjoy real contact with nature, and at the end of activity to buy picked products (Ezung, 2011). According to the practice, implemented successfully all over the world, different kinds of sports are used as a form of important agritourism attractions between many tourism service providers. One of the most popular agritourism activities is riding, in particular horse riding. Since hunting and fishing usually take place in rural areas the connection of these sport activities to agritourism can be also easily justified. Moreover, hand falconry is considered as a typical product of agritourism. Falconry has a quite big popularity in Kazakhstan, particularly in the central part of the country and could be developed as one of the main agritourism attractions. However, falconry is considered as a quite expensive form of agritourism product, and in this regard it is especially important to identify how much money consumers are ready to spend on such kind of experience. As Sznajder et al. (2009) recognize, services associated with sport requiring large spaces can also vary from the most common, such as walking and riding a bicycle, to the most complicated and relatively expensive forms like golf or lawn tennis. Furthermore, agritourism products include educational or farm tours usually offered to consumers as popular entertaining activities. Educational tours are usually organized with the aim to enable tourists to have close contact with local culture and nature. In many countries it is associated with national parks. Farm tours are provided with the purpose of demonstrating picturesque local landscapes, rural villages, and ancient historical places in order to make agritourists familiar with history, culture and traditions of local people within natural context. According to the classification of agritourism products suggested by Sznajder et al. (2009) the study investigates consumer's willingness to pay for several offerings including bicycling, pick-your-own activities, farm tours, falconry, fishing, horse riding and B&B agri-accommodation.

Agritourism Development and Income Distribution between Rural and Urban Population. Tourism in Kazakhstan has acquired fundamentally different development path since the advent of independence in 1991. Previously perceived as an undeveloped part of Soviet Union, the country had no chance to create its own image as a tourism destination with unique features. Nowadays within the framework of "Governmental program on accelerated industrial-innovative development of the Republic of Kazakhstan" and "Strategic Plan of Tourism Development for 2011–2015" special priority is given to tourism in the country as a profitable sector of

the economy, thereby tourism industry is supported on the governmental level (Kurmangaliyeva, 2010).

However agritourism in Kazakhstan is being developed on its own terms without a discrete strategic guidance. There is a lack of regulations established and approved by state especially for agritourism in Kazakhstan. In other words, agritourism providers are operating tourism business on their own initiative these days. Tourism offerings organized in a form of agritourism packages are gradually spreading in Northern and Southern parts of the Republic, including Burabay resort and Zhetisu region. Special offerings such as experiencing nomadic lifestyle in ethno-villages are provided by tourism enterprises, while individual owners lease private rural houses to vacationers for accommodation. In most cases it is basically family-run small businesses. In general, agritourism in Kazakhstan is not formed as a well-developed tourism concept, and despite the existence of several rural tourism business initiatives it is still a new emerging sector of national tourism industry. But for local families' initiative, developing agritourism in rural areas requires external investment and sufficient supports in a form of government subsidies (Capriello and Rotherham, 2008). Furthermore, Calado et al. (2011: 164) state that "the process of development must occur at the local level" and makes a special emphasis on cooperation of all social institutions. As European practices show agritourism development measures will be successful, if its implementation and further development is regulated and there is a well-planned overall strategy established by government (Bull, 1999). Therefore, elaborated policy instruments for agritourism development and promotion, coordination centers ensuring professional assistance are needed for the Republic of Kazakhstan, especially at the initial stage of tourism development (Fleischer and Felsenstein, 2000).

According to the latest statistical data, population living in rural areas in Kazakhstan takes 45.32% of the total population (Agency of Statistics RK, 2012: 8). The average income of rural residents is significantly lower than the income of urban residents. Previous researches conducted on households revealed that in the first quarter of 2012 the proportion of population with the income below the cost of living amounted to 3.9%. Compared to 2011 it was lower by 1.6%. However, the proportion of rural population with the income which is below the living costs has exceeded the proportion of urban population 4 times and reached 6.6% (Agency of Statistics RK, 2012). Figure 1 demonstrates the overall statistics.

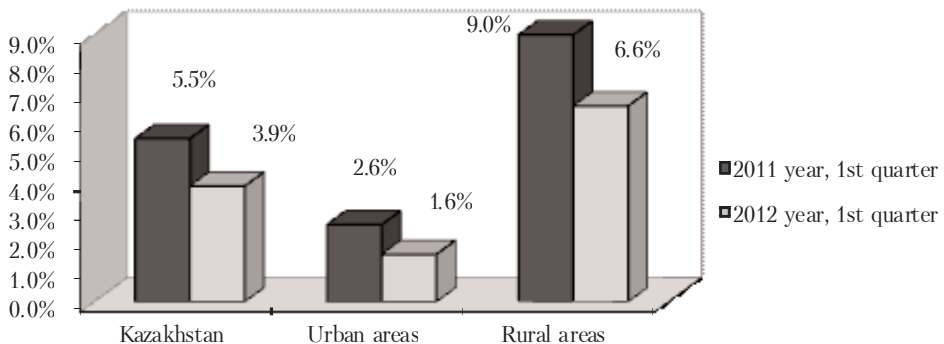


Figure 1. The proportion of population with the income below the cost of living, developed by the author (Kenebayeva, 2012)

During 2004–2010 special measures aimed at economic development of rural areas and improvement of rural population's well-being were realized within the framework of governmental program on the encouragement of small and medium enterprises (SME), and the program demonstrated positive results. Provision of microloans aimed to increase the level of income as well as to prevent poverty in rural areas has demonstrated positive effect in motivating local people. Rural people had been provided with special loans in order to enable them to start their own business. Governmental support to SMEs had led to the increase of income generated from entrepreneurship in rural areas. However, between 2006 and 2010 the income generated from self-employment and entrepreneurship did not increase as before, all the indicators showed the decline from 11.8% to 9.6% (Sange Research Center, 2011).

Under the existing conditions agritourism in Kazakhstan can be considered as a supplementary strategy assisting to foregoing supportive measures and social programs provided by the local government because it has significant role for rural economy, especially in terms of opportunities for generating extra income and creating more jobs (Fleischer and Felsenstein, 2000). Agritourism has a favorable effect on the territorial balance by stabilizing depopulation processes caused by massive migration from rural areas (Mortan, 2006). Furthermore, agritourism is a cost effective business activity that does not require expensive infrastructure, since it could be developed easily based on the existing resources of most households, farms and ranches (Wilson et al., 2001). However, it is argued that agritourism is not considered as a real job opportunity because it basically creates additional family works or part-time jobs rather than full time sustainable jobs with regularly paid salaries. In spite of this agritourism is able to make greater contribution if it takes primary role in household's activities. In other words, agritourism is efficient when a considerable part of income comes from tourism instead of agricultural activities (Calado et al., 2011). Trunfio et al. (2006: 428) claims that "in European context small, independent accommodation enterprises play a vital role in terms of contribution to national and European GDP and tourism employment". Since the common agritourism offering is associated with a provision of overnight tourist accommodation, it is suggested to implement and support such kind of business activities in rural regions in Kazakhstan in order to overcome economic decline in rural areas and improve economic conditions for local people. Measures on tourism development in rural territories are usually crowned with success if taken in regional scope with the collaboration of local government administrations, SMEs and other public institutions (Wilson et al., 2001).

Developing the Research Hypothesis. Ashutosh (2007) reveals 5 main factors that impact the willingness to pay such as customer perceptions, customer characteristics, customer circumstances, customer situational factors, and market environment. The current study focuses on customer characteristics and aims to investigate the influence of demographic features, in particular, income level and geographical location on consumers willingness to pay. It is emphasized that differences in customer's willingness to pay depend on individual customer characteristics (Ashutosh, 2007). Relying on this, two research hypotheses have been developed:

Hypothesis 1: Consumers with high income level have a greater WTP for agritourism products than consumers with low income.

Hypothesis 2: Urban consumers have a greater WTP for agritourism products than rural consumers.

Research Design and Sample Description. According to Wedgwood and Sansom (2003) a study on willingness to pay is generally conducted in 3 following ways:

1. Observation of paid prices at different markets.
2. Investigation of consumers' expenditures based on focus group interviews.
3. Direct questioning of customers on their willingness to spend a certain amount of money for certain products or services.

In order to get knowledge about the real consumers' solvency, the third way is selected as a data collecting approach. The survey was conducted in the cities of Zhezkazgan (central region), Aktay (South-Western region) and neighboring rural areas during the period from February till April of 2013. Questionnaires were randomly distributed to urban and rural population, and the sample size was 400 people.

In general, 400 questionnaires have been distributed, and the total of 285 useable surveys were received from respondents showing the overall response rate of 71.25%. Income distribution statistics represents that the average income level of rural respondents is considerably lower than that of urban respondents. 46.8% of rural residents are earning less than 300 USD per month, while considerable part of urban consumers (30.7%) indicates their average income per month corresponds to 301–500 USD. More detailed description of characteristics of the urban and rural samples is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Consumers' Characteristics: Income Level and Living Area, developed by the author

<i>Average income per month</i>	Urban Consumers (n = 176)		Rural Consumers (n = 109)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Under 300 USD	40	22.7	51	46.8
301–500 USD	54	30.7	19	17.4
501–700 USD	28	15.9	12	11.0
701–1000 USD	26	14.8	15	13.8
Above 1000 USD	28	15.9	12	11.0

The Research Findings. The research hypotheses have been tested relying on the independent samples T-test. According to the first hypothesis the relationship between willingness to pay and the main demographic characteristic of customers represented by the level of average income has been examined. The study analyzed consumer's willingness to pay in terms of certain agritourism products including pick-your-own activities, horse riding, fishing, falconry, farm tours, bicycling, and one night B&B accommodation. The findings of the study revealed that the willingness to pay is affected by average income level. Furthermore, the results of independent samples T-test showed there is a significant difference ($p = 0.000$ Sig 2-tailed) between 2 customer groups with different demographic profiles (Table 2). The empirical findings of the research justified that consumers with high income level have greater willingness to pay than consumers with low income for agritourism products, which is clearly represented by differences in mean scores (Table 2). More detailed information on customer's willingness to pay for agritourism products is comprehensively demonstrated in Table 3, and as it can be clearly seen from indicators, consumers with high

level of income are ready to pay higher prices for agritourism products comparing to people with low income.

Table 2. Group Statistics and T-test results, developed by the author

Agritourism Products	Average income per month				T-test	
	less 300 USD n = 91		above 1000 USD n = 40			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
One night B&B agri-accommodation	1.96	1.483	3.33	2.018	-3.858	0.000
Pick your own product	1.42	.761	3.38	1.764	-6.747	0.000
Horse riding	2.13	1.231	4.03	1.387	-7.796	0.000
Fishing	1.64	.949	3.88	1.556	-8.434	0.000
Falconry	1.27	.616	2.23	1.672	-3.493	0.000
Bicycling	1.47	.821	3.30	1.786	-6.190	0.000
Farm tours	2.10	1.350	4.35	1.292	-8.902	0.000

* p < 0.05.

Table 3. Customer's Willingness to Pay for Agritourism Products, %, developed by the author

Preferable Prices	Average income per month				
	less 300 USD	301-500 USD	501-700 USD	701-1000 USD	above 1000 USD
Willingness to pay for B&B					
35 USD	46.7	23.8	13.3	10.5	5.7
36-50 USD	32.9	23.7	15.8	11.8	15.8
51-60 USD	11.4	28.6	14.3	17.1	28.6
61-70 USD	17.2	31.0	24.1	20.7	6.9
71-80 USD	33.3	44.4	0.0	22.2	0.0
81-100 USD	17.6	17.6	11.8	23.5	29.4
more than 100 USD	14.3	28.6	0.0	21.4	35.7
Willingness to pay for Pick your own					
3 USD	38.9	26.3	13.8	13.8	7.2
4-6 USD	34.7	32.7	18.4	10.2	4.1
7-9 USD	21.4	32.1	17.9	17.9	10.7
10-12 USD	20.0	6.7	20.0	20.0	33.3
13-15 USD	0.0	11.5	0.0	19.2	69.2
Willingness to pay for Horse Riding					
4 USD	41.5	30.9	12.8	10.6	4.3
5-7 USD	39.6	31.3	16.7	8.3	4.2
8-10 USD	32.3	29.2	16.9	10.8	10.8
11-13 USD	23.1	15.4	23.1	26.9	11.5
14-16 USD	11.5	11.5	5.8	25.0	46.2
Willingness to pay for Fishing					
4 USD	42.4	30.3	13.6	8.3	5.3
5-7 USD	40.0	24.4	17.8	15.6	2.2
8-10 USD	26.7	26.7	17.8	17.8	11.1
11-13 USD	19.0	28.6	14.3	19.0	19.0
14-16 USD	2.4	9.5	7.1	26.2	54.8

Continuation of Table 3

Preferable Prices	Average income per month				
	less 300 USD	301-500 USD	501-700 USD	701-1000 USD	above 1000 USD
Willingness to pay for Falconry					
70-100 USD	36.1	24.3	12.9	15.3	11.4
101-120 USD	32.4	24.3	24.3	8.1	10.8
121-150 USD	17.9	46.4	14.3	10.7	10.7
151-170 USD	25.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	25.0
171-200 USD	0.0	7.1	0.0	28.6	64.3
Willingness to Pay for Bicycling					
4 USD	40.1	28.7	12.7	10.8	7.6
5-7 USD	28.1	28.1	21.1	17.5	5.3
8-10 USD	30.3	30.3	12.1	12.1	15.2
11-13 USD	10.0	20.0	30.0	30.0	10.0
14-16 USD	3.6	0.0	3.6	25.0	67.9
Willingness to Pay for Farm Tours					
3 USD	40.2	29.5	14.3	12.5	3.6
4-6 USD	34.0	32.0	18.0	14.0	2.0
7-9 USD	34.3	25.7	14.3	22.9	2.9
10-12 USD	30.0	30.0	10.0	13.3	16.7
13-15 USD	13.8	10.3	12.1	13.8	50.0

The results of the independent samples T-test conducted on the second research hypothesis defined there is no significant difference in the willingness to pay between 2 customer groups depending on the living area. However, only one exception needs to be mentioned regarding the pick your own activity with $p = 0.007$ Sig 2-tailed, showing that urban consumers (mean = 2.05) have greater willingness to pay for this than rural consumers (mean = 1.64) (Table 4).

Summarizing the research findings it can be concluded, that customers' demographic feature of income level has stronger impact on the willingness to pay than their geographic location.

Table 4. Group Statistics and T-test results, %, developed by the author

Variables	Average income per month				T-test	
	urban n = 176		rural n = 109			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig (2-tailed)
One night B&B agri-accommodation	2,64	1,849	2,37	1,591	1,332	0,184
Pick your own product	2,05	1,405	1,64	1,093	2,707	0,007
Horse riding	2,71	1,575	2,50	1,295	1,251	0,221
Fishing	2,38	1,529	2,14	1,371	1,359	0,175
Falconry	1,64	1,087	1,45	1,004	1,451	0,148
Bicycling	2,03	1,412	1,77	1,086	1,732	0,084
Farm tours	2,56	1,577	2,53	1,573	0,158	0,874

* $p < 0.05$.

Conclusion. This paper analyzed the influence of demographic features on consumer's willingness to pay, and identified a difference in willingness to pay between

consumers with high and low income levels. The study concludes that consumers with high income level are more willing to pay higher prices for agritourism products than consumers with low income level. Although, the indicators show that the income level in rural areas is lower than in urban areas, it is revealed that the willingness to pay does not significantly differ depending on their geographic location. These findings offer useful implications for agritourism service providers in terms of developing price strategies, accurately able to reflect customers' WTP, thus to gain competitive advantage against business rivals.

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КНИЖКОВИЙ СВІТ



СУЧАСНА ЕКОНОМІЧНА ТА ЮРИДИЧНА ОСВІТА
ПРЕСТИЖНИЙ ВИЩИЙ НАВЧАЛЬНИЙ ЗАКЛАД
НАЦІОНАЛЬНА АКАДЕМІЯ УПРАВЛІННЯ

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Транснаціональні корпорації: Навчальний посібник. –
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У навчальному посібнику викладено теоретичні основи виникнення, становлення та розвитку транснаціональних корпорацій, механізм їхнього функціонування та вплив на світову економіку. Розглянуто систему національного і міжнародного регулювання ТНК.

Посібник містить також ситуаційні вправи, що дозволяє закріпити теоретичні знання шляхом виконання практичних завдань та обговорення ситуаційних вправ.

Призначений для студентів та викладачів вузів. Посібник стане корисним всім, хто цікавиться проблемами транснаціоналізації світової економіки.