# Journal of the Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management 53–1/2024

Original scientific article

# A SUSTAINABLE DISTRIBUTION MODEL FOR AGROWELLNESS: STRATEGIES FOR TOURIST FARM INNOVATION AND GROWTH

Tina Cvahte Ojsteršek<sup>A</sup>, Lazar Pavić<sup>A\*</sup>

Received: April 06, 2024 | Accepted: Jun 21, 2024

DOI: 10.5937/ZbDght24010590

#### **ABSTRACT**

The concepts of "agrotourism" (or agritourism), focusing on farm-based tourism, and "wellness tourism," which emphasises health and well-being through travel, are common and well-researched. As the paper explores, this combination presents a strategic approach to enhance the tourist farms' offer by aligning it with contemporary desires for health, relaxation, and nature immersion. Based on exploring the existing offerings on tourist farms in rural Slovenia and a survey among potential users, we identified some aspects of why agrowellness is not yet developed to the extent one would expect. Focusing on six main areas—local identity, sustainability, community engagement, innovation, digitalisation, and sports activities— the developed distribution model outlines what steps farms can take to reach a broader audience and contribute to sustainable development. By integrating authentic local experiences, eco-friendly practices, community collaboration, innovative activities, a robust digital presence, and opportunities for active outdoor recreation, tourist farms can offer unique, enriching experiences that appeal to modern tourists seeking wellness and connection with nature in the spirit of agrowellness. This comprehensive strategy aims to elevate the agrowellness sector's appeal. It supports the preservation of rural heritage and promotes healthy lifestyles, positioning tourist farms as crucial players in a sustainably focused tourism industry.

Keywords: Agrowellness, Distribution, Tourist Farms, Innovation, Wellness Tourism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Agrotourism, particularly in the form of farm tourism, plays a significant role in the tourism industry across Europe (Potočnik-Slavič, Schmitz, 2013). By offering unique experiences based on authentic ambience, tradition, and healthy food, farms can create an attractive tourist offer that contributes to revitalising rural areas (Dragicevic, 2007). The positioning of agritourism within the broader tourist market is crucial, with farms as the primary entities providing services that leverage cultural, social, environmental, and economic resources (Dubois, Schmitz, 2013). This type of tourism is becoming popular due to the desire to move away from everyday life and relax in nature. The activities such as feeding animals, farm chores and homemade food preparation enrich the experience, which is attractive for families with children who see this as an ideal holiday for relaxation (Greif et al., 2011). This can further be built upon with initiatives such as traditional gastronomic experiences (Ivanović et al., 2022). Additionally, the development of agrotourism has been identi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>A</sup> University of Maribor, Faculty of Logistics, Mariborska cesta 7, SI – 3000 Celje, Slovenia

<sup>\*</sup> Correspondence: <u>lazar.pavic@um.si</u>

fied as a viable option to stimulate growth and socioeconomic reactivation in less favoured areas, leveraging the natural, historical, cultural, and social potential of agricultural communities (Entenza et al., 2022) and also bringing a vital source of income to the rural population (Jęczmyk et al., 2015). Agrotourism, which involves visitors engaging in agricultural activities and experiencing rural life, is closely connected to wellness tourism. Wellness tourism focuses on enhancing one's well-being, both physically and mentally, through activities that promote relaxation, stress relief, and overall health improvement. The connection between agrotourism and wellness tourism lies in the therapeutic benefits for visitors that derive from engaging with the natural environment of countryside locations, agricultural tours, local product tastings, and immersion in natural surroundings (Feng et al., 2021). Wellness tourism, which began to develop in the middle of the 20th century, originates from the ancient Romans who discovered the effects of thermal water. Europe has developed this tradition through balneology, using thermal water for well-being (Gojčič, 2020). Agrowellness combines agrarian and wellness tourism, offering natural holidays with the possibility of a healthy lifestyle (Greif et al., 2011; Pesonen, Komppula, 2010). This type of tourism offer can be significant in the times like the present, after the COVID-19 pandemic, when the impacts of the pandemic are seen in mental and physical health deterioration as well (Sekulić, 2023).

Greif, Rauscher, and Söntgerath (2011) clarify that agrarian tourism is not only for the middle social class with less purchasing power but also an exclusive experience that combines nature and advanced wellness technology and is accessible primarily to higher social classes. Ana (2017) emphasises the economic impact of agrowellness on local communities by creating jobs, while Greif et al. (2011) highlight its contribution to preventing rural migration, security, nature conservation, promoting healthy lifestyles and ensuring tranquillity. The agrowellness business includes various products for maintaining health. However, many farms do not recognise their potential in this segment due to their focus on primary agricultural activity and shortcomings in distribution channels (Katsoni, Dionysopoulou, 2015).

Short supply chains at the heart of successful agrowellness centres enable sustainable development and green and socially responsible tourism. Connecting with local producers and manufacturers enables the development and maintenance of a high-quality and sustainable offer that is attractive to many tourists who want to retreat from urban cities and a fast pace of life and escape daily routines (Pesonen, Komppula, 2010). It is also attractive to providers who want to offer unique and high-quality products directly to consumers with greater transparency in the production process, that builds trust with visitors, and provides opportunities for agrotourism providers to differentiate themselves in the market (Azima & Mundler, 2022). By streamlining the supply chain, agrotourism providers can improve efficiency, minimise waste, and increase profitability, which would be ultimately beneficial both for the providers and the local community (Velly et al., 2022).

A distribution model is a strategic approach that describes how a product or service goes from the manufacturer (provider) to the end consumer (customer). This model involves wholesalers, distributors, retail stores and online commerce stakeholders. Distribution channels are divided into direct, indirect and hybrid (Patel, 2023). With the direct channel, the buyer makes purchases on the spot where something is produced. With the indirect channel, we have retailers, wholesalers or brokers between the manufacturer and the buyer. The hybrid design is a mixture of both together (for example, factories that produce products and at the same time have a small shop, which could potentially also be applied to agrowellness farms).

Firstly, a good distribution model allows farms to reach a wider audience through different channels, which can increase visibility and sales (Tošović-Stevanović, et al., 2020). Secondly, it can help optimise sales and profits by allowing farms to find the best channels for selling agrowellness products or services. In addition, the distribution model can help establish more personal relationships with customers, as it allows direct interaction between farms and customers. This direct interaction can lead to greater loyalty and greater customer satisfaction.

The 4P marketing mix, which comprises product, price, place and promotion, is the basis for achieving companies' marketing goals in the target market. This model is instrumental when marketing physical products. However, in the context of services, the extended 7P model is used, which, in addition to the primary four Ps, includes people, physical evidence, and processes (McCabe, 2022). Understanding these additional el-

ements is vital in tailoring and improving the offerings, as it provides deeper insight into the needs and expectations of the target audience.

The product in the marketing web represents everything offered on the market – from physical products to services and experiences. Most products do not significantly impact the market, so the goal is to create valuable and functional products for customers (McCabe, 2022). The place refers to how a product or service reaches the consumer, including distribution strategies that can increase sales and profits (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The price must be carefully determined according to demand, costs, competitive trends, and government regulations, as it directly impacts sales and profit. The promotion covers strategies for acquiring new and retaining existing customers, from direct marketing to advertising and public relations (McCabe, 2022). The physical evidence elements such as website, logos, packaging, workplace design, and customer experience strengthen the brand and contribute to its visibility. The people involved in the process must be trained, professional and communicative, as their approach directly affects customers' perception and satisfaction. Finally, the processes that define how services are distributed and delivered must be clearly defined, simple, and oriented towards customer satisfaction (Pizam et al., 2016). In the agricultural sphere, the essential 4Ps are often amended by three other Ps (Policies, Physical Climate, and Partners) to reach a 7Ps model (Dodor, 2014).

Companies can adopt a holistic marketing approach that integrates various components to develop competitive advantages, enhance flexibility, and achieve success in the market (Peterson & Minton, 2021). Understanding and effectively utilising the 7Ps marketing mix can significantly contribute to developing and promoting agrowellness activities and other services, leading to improved business outcomes. By embracing a holistic marketing strategy, companies can define their objectives and business strategies in a manner that considers long-term benefits and social responsibility (Prosenak et al., 2008). Since evidence clearly shows that destination image, positive experience and loyalty to ecotourism are essential factors in choosing tourist destinations (Amani & Akbari, 2023), which further underscores the need for a good marketing and distribution strategy to attract potential customers to the agrowellness world.

The research was conducted in two stages. First, a survey of crucial customers of agrowellness services was carried out, determining the starting points for the service distribution model. In parallel, a sample of tourist farms from Eastern Slovenia that already exist or are potential providers of agrowellness services were reviewed. Based on the results, a distribution model of goods was set up, combining the guidelines for the marketing mix and distribution strategy design with findings regarding the current state and wishes of potential users, as well as the existing offer.

This study aims to develop an effective distribution model for agrowellness services, incorporating direct, indirect, and hybrid channels to optimize reach and efficiency. The model will focus on improving visibility, sales, and customer satisfaction through streamlined supply chain management and fostering direct interactions between farms and customers. Additionally, the study seeks to apply the 7Ps marketing mix—product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, and processes—to tailor and enhance the marketing strategies of tourist farms. By leveraging the extended marketing mix, the study will analyse how farms can better understand and meet the needs and expectations of their target audience, ultimately leading to improved business outcomes and stronger market presence.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In the qualitative assessment, researchers focused on a sample of 35 tourist farms in the Eastern Slovenia Cohesion Region, using a checklist with 55 questions that covered a wide range of aspects, including health and wellness activities, sports, nutrition, and mental health. This approach enabled the collection of detailed statistical data on agrowellness offer, categorising the information into six main areas: basic farm details, sports and recreational activities, healthy eating habits, mental wellness, active services for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and additional rural tourism offer. The methodology provided an in-depth overview of the current

state of agrowellness services. It highlighted areas suitable for further development and improvement based on the collected and processed statistical and graphical data.

In the quantitative part of the study, an online survey was conducted to investigate the wellness tourist services offered in rural areas of the Eastern Slovenia Cohesion Region. The survey aimed to capture the local population's (or domestic tourists') needs, desires, and expectations regarding farm tourism and promoting a healthy lifestyle through local products. It also sought to explore the sustainable habits of Slovenians and identify the obstacles hindering access to, distribution of, and transfer of goods from the local country-side. The questionnaire was structured into five thematic sections with 27 questions, addressing topics such as tourism habits, wellness offer, activities in nature, and the community's connection to agrowellness. The data was gathered in 2023 among 127 respondents, along with the insights from the qualitative assessment, which were instrumental in shaping a model for distributing agrowellness services. Combining the qualitative observations with the quantitative survey findings, a comprehensive strategy was developed to enhance the visibility and accessibility of agrowellness services, ensuring they meet the evolving preferences and requirements of both local residents and tourists. This integrated approach underscored the current state of agrowellness offerings and paved the way for their strategic development and improvement.

# Sampling

The study used a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative assessments to comprehensively evaluate agrowellness services in the Eastern Slovenia Cohesion Region.

For the qualitative assessment, researchers selected a purposive sample of 35 tourist farms from the Eastern Cohesion Region. This region was chosen due to its diverse range of rural tourism activities and potential for agrowellness services. The selection criteria for the farms included their active engagement in tourism, variety of offered services, and geographical distribution within the region to ensure a representative overview. A checklist of 55 questions was used to gather detailed information on various aspects of agrowellness offerings, including health and wellness activities, sports, nutrition, and mental health. This comprehensive checklist enabled the researchers to categorize and analyse the data into six main areas: basic farm details, sports and recreational activities, healthy eating habits, mental wellness, active services for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and additional rural tourism offerings.

In the quantitative part of the study, an online survey was conducted targeting the local population and domestic tourists within the Eastern Cohesion Region. The survey aimed to capture their needs, desires, and expectations regarding farm tourism and promoting a healthy lifestyle through local products. Additionally, it sought to explore the sustainable habits of Slovenians and identify obstacles hindering access to and distribution of goods from the local countryside. The questionnaire was structured into five thematic sections with 27 questions covering tourism habits, wellness offerings, activities in nature, and the community's connection to agrowellness.

The survey was administered in 2023 and collected responses from 127 participants. This sample was selected through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods, where the initial respondents were asked to indicate others within their network who fit the target demographic. This approach facilitated the collection of a diverse range of perspectives and ensured a broad representation of the local population's views and experiences.

By combining the qualitative data from the in-depth farm assessments with the quantitative survey results, the researchers were able to develop a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the visibility and accessibility of agrowellness services. This integrated approach provided valuable insights into the current state of agrowellness offerings and identified key areas for strategic development and improvement.

## Agrowellness offer analysis results

The analysis of the offer on tourist farms in the Eastern Slovenia Cohesion Region revealed a strong emphasis on sustainability and self-sufficiency. On average, the farms demonstrated a high rate of self-sufficiency, at 68.7%, underscoring the importance of sustainable practices in the region. This commitment to sustainability is further highlighted by the fact that all surveyed farms are members of the Association of Farms of Slovenia, indicating a robust network that supports a wide range of accommodation facilities and activities for tourists.

Room and apartment accommodation emerged as the most common types of lodging available on these farms, providing guests with comfortable and homely settings. In contrast, specialised services such as horse riding were less frequently offered, primarily due to concerns over safety and the time-consuming nature of such activities. Despite this, a significant 91% of the farms made sports equipment available to their guests, encouraging physical activity and engagement with the natural environment.

Although many farms did not feature swimming pools, they compensated by offering a variety of guided tours and recreational activities that allow visitors to explore and enjoy the rural landscape. The use of homegrown produce as part of food offerings was a prevalent practice among the farms, ensuring freshness and quality in the meals provided to guests. This approach not only enhances the culinary experience but also supports the farms' sustainability efforts.

In addition to these offerings, the farms included relaxation techniques and cultural engagements in their services. These activities aim to connect guests with the local heritage and natural environment, providing a holistic approach to rural tourism. By integrating these diverse experiences, the tourist farms in Slovenia successfully create an authentic and enriching experience for their visitors, highlighting the unique charm and appeal of rural destinations.

# Survey analysis results

The survey conducted among potential users (tourists) of agrowellness services provided insightful data on preferences and behaviours related to rural wellness tourism. According to the survey results, 56.14% of participants expressed their preference for rural wellness experiences, while 25.73% remained neutral, and 18.13% favoured urban wellness options. The primary advantages of rural wellness, as identified by 49.34% of respondents, included beautiful nature and tranquillity, which significantly enhance relaxation and overall well-being. Rural destinations were particularly appreciated for offering privacy and authentic interactions, with hosts providing a homely and unique atmosphere that encourages repeat visits.

When rating the frequency of various tourist activities in rural settings, hiking, picnics, and bird watching emerged as the most popular choices among the respondents. These activities allow tourists to engage closely with nature and enjoy the serene landscapes. In contrast, sports such as golf, tennis, and horse riding were less commonly pursued, reflecting either a lack of facilities or lower interest among tourists.

Regarding sustainable tourism practices, the survey results indicated a positive trend towards consuming local organic food products. Specifically, 73% of respondents reported consuming these products occasionally, 25% always, and only 2% never. However, the preference for using cars to reach rural destinations was overwhelmingly high, with 92.98% of tourists opting for this mode of transport. This highlights a potential area for improvement in promoting more sustainable travel options.

The survey also identified significant obstacles to promoting a healthy lifestyle in local communities. The primary issues included poor promotion of local providers and products, coupled with a general lack of knowledge about healthy living. These findings suggest a need for better marketing strategies and educational initiatives to enhance awareness and accessibility of local wellness offerings.

In terms of factors important for developing the agrowellness offer, respondents highlighted the involvement of the local population, promotion of local tourist attractions and tourism providers, environmental

care, and preservation of natural heritage as crucial elements. Interestingly, while most factors were deemed necessary, "investment in infrastructure" was considered less crucial, indicating a preference for leveraging existing resources and focusing on sustainable development.

Overall, the survey results provided valuable insights into the preferences and behaviours of potential agrowellness tourists, emphasizing the need for strategic development and improved promotion of rural wellness services. By addressing these factors, tourist farms in Slovenia can better meet the evolving preferences and requirements of both local residents and tourists, ensuring sustainable and attractive agrowellness offer.

### The model of distribution

Our findings reveal two main categories of goods tourist farms offer in agrowellness: material products like food, drinks, homemade cosmetics, souvenirs, and services, including wellness treatments, mental health support, rural sports, and accommodation. This division is crucial for understanding our proposal for improving the distribution of agrowellness goods and services, since physical products attract visitors who may use various services. It makes sense to point out that on most of the observed farms, agrowellness activities were often complementary, done alongside regular jobs or farming, serving as an extra source of income and satisfaction.

Most farms in the study were unaware of their agrowellness potential despite a wide range of health-promoting products and services. The focus on consumer needs over distribution channels found in literature shows gaps in the marketing approach.

Information about the offer is generally found by potential customers directly through events and digital platforms or indirectly through collaboration with travel agencies, reducing advertising risks and allowing more straightforward pricing while offering consumer insights. This enhances the offer adjustment, spreading information about tourist experiences, increasing visibility and attracting visitors. Regarding the marketing strategy, geographic positioning is essential for successful distribution, with the offer being tailored and made accessible to the target population. For instance, products and services for the elderly are better to be offered in physical stores, while the younger demographic is more easily reached online or via apps. Promotion through travel agents and tourism organisations offers significant benefits, from spreading information to using expertise for tourism growth and satisfying customer needs. Organised space, local offerings, and event organisation are crucial for attracting guests and providing unique experiences.

Based on these findings, we can synthesise directions for distributing agrowellness offerings based on crucial starting points.

### Starting point: People primarily drive cars to tourist farms.

The survey showed that 93% of visitors use cars to access tourist farms, often located in hard-to-reach areas. Despite the interest in sustainability, the location of farms limits the modal shift.

Proposal: For larger groups, tourist farms should offer organised transport, such as buses or vans, from the main stations. This would attract eco-conscious guests. In addition, an investment in electric bicycles would allow guests to explore the surroundings without needing organised transportation.

### Starting Point: People prefer wellness in the countryside rather than in the city.

The questionnaire revealed the advantages of rural wellness because of tranquillity and proximity to nature. These advantages are often overlooked.

Proposal: Highlight the benefits of rural wellness, such as 'forest bath' and 'nature hug' and promote the countryside's unique energy through various marketing channels.

Starting point: The most significant interest in the countryside is sports, followed by wellness and mental health wellness.

Observation has shown that farms follow customers' wishes well for cycling and hiking.

The proposal: Regularly upkeep and maintain cycling routes, add activities such as traditional farm games, and promote cycling routes to attract cyclists.

### Starting point: People are sustainably oriented and want locally produced products.

The survey showed great interest in locally produced products, but higher prices are often an obstacle.

The proposal: Emphasise farms' sustainable operation and educate people about the value of locally produced products. The possibility for customers to actively participate in agricultural tasks could raise awareness of the importance of sustainable practices.

# Starting Point: Besides sustainability, people look at their health, which affects interest in locally produced food.

Research shows that health is becoming crucial for consumers looking for locally grown products.

Suggestion: When selling locally grown food and natural cosmetics, highlight the health benefits.

### Starting point: Raising awareness about selling products in markets and fairs is essential.

The survey showed that farms' physical products are insufficiently accessible.

Proposal: Use marketing strategies to raise awareness of purchasing opportunities at markets and fairs and promote farm-derived physical products.

### Starting point: Most farm operators are over 50 years old.

More than half of the farm operators are older, showing the need to adapt to modern technology.

Proposal: Conduct marketing workshops to get them acquainted with self-promotion and the most popular mobile and web applications.

### Starting point: More than half of the respondents live in rural areas.

The purchase of agrowellness goods is complicated for residents of rural areas due to the dispersed location of markets.

Proposal: Make local markets in rural areas more accessible to improve access to fresh local goods.

### Starting point: Only 60% of tourist farms offer the opportunity to buy a physical product or a souvenir.

Visitors often cannot buy souvenirs at all locations.

Proposal: Arrange farm shops to sell unique products and souvenirs and improve promotion.

### Starting point: The expected price for staying on a tourist farm is too low.

People are willing to pay between 30 and 80 € per night, which is quite below the actual value.

The proposal: Introduce agrowellness packages, including various services, to raise awareness of the actual value of the offer.

### Starting Point: Most tourist farms are connected to local tourist destinations.

Farms connect with local attractions and with each other.

The proposal: By working together, farms can provide a diverse and high-quality offer and enhance the guest experience.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the data obtained from surveys, proposals presented and described starting points for the distribution of agrowellness services, it is clear that there are several critical areas in which tourist farms can focus on improving and diversifying their offer. The discussion focuses on six main points: local identity, sustainability, local community, innovation, digitalisation and digital technologies, and sports, which together form an integrated approach to upgrading agrowellness services.

Local identity is the foundation for creating unique and authentic experiences that give visitors a deeper insight into the cultural and natural heritage of the region. The emphasis on traditional crafts, cultural events, and heritage contributes to preserving the local culture and enhances tourists' interest and satisfaction. This means that tourist farms that integrate local identity into their offer can expect greater interest and loyalty from visitors.

Sustainability and ecological awareness are becoming increasingly important for modern tourists looking for environmentally friendly holiday options. Therefore, tourist farms that highlight their sustainable practic-

es have an advantage in attracting this target group. Emphasising organic production, recycling and using renewable energy sources not only contributes to environmental protection but also increases the competitiveness of farms.

Active cooperation with the local community and other tourism providers enables joint promotion and organisation of events, increasing the region's visibility. Innovation in offering experiences, such as themed gardens or culinary workshops, opens up new possibilities for attracting tourists and improving the offer.

The digital presence and use of digital technologies for promotion and communication are becoming critical elements in modern tourism. Tourist farms that use digital platforms efficiently can reach a broader range of potential guests and improve their visibility.

Finally, sports activities represent an essential complement to the offer of tourist farms, as they enable guests to experience an active holiday in nature while connecting with the local environment and its characteristics.

The bottom line is that by integrating these key points into their strategy, tourist farms can improve and diversify their offer, increase visibility, and attract a broader range of guests. The emphasis on local identity, sustainability, cooperation with the local community, innovation, digital presence, and the offer of sports activities is not only a response to modern trends in tourism but also a path to ensuring sustainable and responsible development of tourist farms towards true agrowellness providers.

This paper makes a significant theoretical contribution by synthesising key elements that constitute an integrated approach to upgrading agrowellness services on tourist farms. By focusing on six main areas—local identity, sustainability, local community cooperation, innovation, digitalisation, and sports—the paper provides a comprehensive framework that can be used to understand and enhance the multifaceted nature of agrotourism. It enriches existing literature by highlighting the importance of a holistic strategy that combines cultural preservation, environmental consciousness, community engagement, technological advancement, and recreational activities. This integrated approach not only addresses current trends in tourism but also offers a sustainable model for future development, providing a valuable resource for academic discourse and further research in the field of agrowellness and sustainable tourism.

Practically, this paper offers actionable insights and strategies for tourist farms aiming to diversify and improve their offerings. By emphasizing the integration of local identity through traditional crafts and cultural events, farms can create unique and authentic experiences that enhance visitor satisfaction and loyalty. The focus on sustainability practices, such as organic production and renewable energy use, provides a clear pathway for farms to attract environmentally conscious tourists. Encouraging active cooperation with the local community and other tourism providers can lead to joint promotional efforts and event organization, increasing regional visibility. Moreover, the paper underscores the importance of leveraging digital technologies for promotion and communication, enabling farms to reach a wider audience. Finally, incorporating sports activities into the farm's offerings can cater for guests seeking active, nature-based experiences. These practical recommendations provide a blueprint for tourist farms to evolve into true agrowellness providers, ensuring both competitive advantage and sustainable development.

Despite its comprehensive approach, this study has several shortcomings and limitations. One significant limitation is the reliance on survey data, which may not fully capture the complex realities and diverse practices of tourist farms globally. The geographical scope of the surveys may also be limited, potentially skewing the findings towards specific regions and neglecting variations in agrowellness practices across different cultural and ecological contexts. Additionally, the study's emphasis on six main areas, while comprehensive, might overlook other crucial factors influencing agrowellness services, such as regulatory frameworks, economic constraints, and social dynamics within rural communities. There is also a potential bias in the selection of the participants in the survey, who may be more inclined towards innovative and sustainable practices, thus not representing the broader spectrum of tourist farms.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating a more diverse and extensive sample of tourist farms from different regions and contexts. Comparative studies between various countries and regions could provide deeper insights into how local conditions influence the implementation of agrowellness services. Additionally, future research should explore other potential factors affecting agrowellness, such

as government policies, financial support mechanisms, and social interactions within rural areas. Longitudinal studies could also be valuable, tracking the evolution of agrowellness services over time and assessing the long-term impacts of integrating local identity, sustainability, community cooperation, innovation, digitalisation, and sports activities. Finally, qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and case studies, could complement survey data, providing richer, more nuanced understandings of the challenges and opportunities in the field of agrowellness tourism.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This research was partially funded by University of Maribor as part of the ŠI:UM Student challenges of the University of Maribor in 2023, within the framework of the Development Pillar of Financing 2021-2024 (RSF 2.0), area: Collaboration with the Environment, Development Goal 1 (O-RC 1).

### **REFERENCES**

- Amani, V. J., Akbari, H. (2023). The influence of satisfaction on loyalty and customer relationship quality on satisfaction and destination image: Chabahar port tourists, Iran. *Zbornik radova Departmana za geografiju, turizam i hotelijerstvo*, 52(1), 20-33. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5937/ZbDght2301020A">https://doi.org/10.5937/ZbDght2301020A</a>
- Ana, M.I. (2017). Ecotourism, agritourism and rural tourism in the European Union. *Cactus Tourism Journal*, 15, 2, 6-14.
- Azima, S. and Mundler, P. (2022). Does direct farm marketing fulfill its promises? analyzing job satisfaction among direct-market farmers in Canada. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 39(2), 791-807. DOI: 10.1007/s10460-021-10289-9
- Dodor, A. (2014). Exploring Marketing Mix for Building a Viable Agro Business. *Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*, 6(2), 78–86. DOI: 10.9734/BJESBS/2015/14877
- Dragičević, V. (2007). Tourism as revitalizing factor of farms- example of Cvetni salaš (flowery farm) and Majkin salaš (grandma's farm) in Palić. *Journal of the Geographical Institute Jovan Cvijić*, SASA, 57, 223-231. DOI:10.2298/ijgi0757223d
- Dubois, C., Schmitz, S. (2013). What is the position of agritourism on the Walloon tourist market? European Countryside, 5, 4, 295-307. DOI:10.2478/euco-2013-0019
- Entenza, N., Pérez, A., & Naranjo, A. (2022). Rural agrotourism development strategies in less favored areas: the case of hacienda Guachinango de Trinidad. *Agriculture*, 12(7), 1047. DOI: 10.3390/agriculture12071047
- Feng, C., Li, H., Li, F., Yu, M., Zhang, H., Ma, Y., ... & Zhang, Z. (2021). Study on current status, problems and countermeasures of countryside health and wellness tourism in China. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 09(04), 212-221. DOI: 10.4236/jss.2021.94016
- Gojčič, S. (2020). Wellness and wellness activities. Available online: <a href="https://vsgt.si/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/">https://vsgt.si/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/</a> <a href="https://vsgt.si/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/">VVD-Goj%C4%8Di%C4%8D-2020.pdf</a>, (Accessed 14/03/2024). (in Slovenian)
- Greif, S., Rauscher, C., Söntgerath, C. (2011). Agritourism. In: Papathanassis, A. (Ed.), Long tail tourism: holiday niches and their impact on mainstream tourism. Gabler Verlag, 25-34.
- Ivanović, V., Pivarski, B. K., Šmugović, S. (2022). Traditional gastronomy products: Usage and significance in tourism and hospitality of southern Bačka (AP Vojvodina). *Zbornik radova Departmana za geografiju, turizam i hotelijerstvo*, 51(1), 64-72. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5937/ZbDght2201064I">https://doi.org/10.5937/ZbDght2201064I</a>
- Jęczmyk, A., Uglis, J., Graja-Zwolińska, S., Maćkowiak, M., Spychała, A., & Sikora, J. (2015). Research note: economic benefits of agritourism development in Poland an empirical study. *Tourism Economics*, 21(5), 1120-1126. DOI:10.5367/te.2014.0391

- Katsoni, V., Dionysopoulou, P. (2015). Marketing of agritourism, distribution strategy and typology research. The case of Arcadia. *Tourismos*, 10, 2, 131–152. DOI: 10.26215/tourismos.v10i2.444
- Kotler, P., Keller, K. L. (2016). Marketing Management. Pearson India.
- McCabe, A. (2022). The 7Ps of The Marketing Mix: Streamline your Strategy. Available online: <a href="https://blog.hurree.co/marketing-mix-7ps">https://blog.hurree.co/marketing-mix-7ps</a> (Accessed 14/03/2024).
- Patel, N. (2023). Distribution channels: what they are, types and examples. Available online: <a href="https://neilpatel.com/blog/distribution-channels">https://neilpatel.com/blog/distribution-channels</a>. (Accessed 14/03/2024).
- Pesonen, J., Komppula, R. (2010). Rural tourism of well-being: motivations and expectations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 17, 1, 150-157. DOI: 10.1375/jhtm.17.1.150
- Peterson, M., Minton E. (2021). Sustainable marketing and consumer support for sustainable businesses. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 27, 1, 157–168. DOI: 10.1016/j.spc.2020.10.018
- Pizam, A., Shapoval, V., Ellis, T. (2016). Customer satisfaction and its measurement in hospitality enterprises: a revisit and update. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 28, 1, 2-35. DOI:10.1108/ijchm-04-2015-0167
- Potočnik-Slavič, I., Schmitz, S. (2013). Farm tourism across Europe. European Countryside, 5, 4, 265-274. DOI:10.2478/euco-2013-0017
- Prosenak, D., Mulej, M., Snoj, B. (2008). A requisitely holistic approach to marketing in terms of social well-being. *Kybernetes*, 37, 9/10, 1508-1529. DOI: 10.1108/03684920810907832
- Sekulić, M. (2023). The influence of COVID-19 on the older adults in Europe: A systematic literature review. *Zbornik radova Departmana za geografiju, turizam i hotelijerstvo*, 52(2), 82-97. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5937/Zb-Dght2302082S">https://doi.org/10.5937/Zb-Dght2302082S</a>
- Tošović-Stevanović, A., Ristanović, V., Ćalović, D., Lalić, G., Žuža, M., & Cvijanović, G. (2020). Small farm business analysis using the AHP model for efficient assessment of distribution channels. *Sustainability*, 12(24), 10479. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3390/su122410479">https://doi.org/10.3390/su122410479</a>
- Velly, R., Goulet, F., & Vinck, D. (2022). Allowing for detachment processes in market innovation. the case of short food supply chains. In: *Market Detachment: Breaking Social Ties in Economic Settings*, Brembeck, H., Cochoy, F., & Hawkins, G. (Eds.). Routhledge. 7-22. DOI: 10.4324/9781003270003-2

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. © 2024 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<a href="http://crea-tive-commons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">http://crea-tive-commons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>).

ORCID Tina Cvahte Ojsteršek <a href="https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0493-900X">https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0493-900X</a>
Lazar Pavić <a href="https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7039-6212">https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7039-6212</a>