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Second generation rural tourism

Research project

- What are the challenges of today's rural tourism?
- 2011-2014
- Norwegian Research Council, County governor and county council in Sør-Trøndelag and Sogn og Fjordane
- Centre of Rural Research (Trondheim), Centre for Tourism Research (Sheffield Hallam University), WNRI (Sogndal).
- Poland, Texas and UK

Ph.D-study

- 2011-2014, Inst. of Geography, NTNU in Trondheim
- Biographies of rural tourism enterprises, Sogn og Fjordane, Norway

What is rural tourism?

- Tourism located in rural areas (OECD, 1994, Lane, 1994)
 - Built upon a rural world of small-scale enterprises, open space, contact with nature, heritage, farms and forest products, traditional communities and practices
 - Usually, but not always small-scale
 - Traditional in character
 - Controlled locally

Rural areas

- Population density and size of settlements
- Land use and economy
- Traditional social structures, community identity and heritage



Background

Modern rural tourism

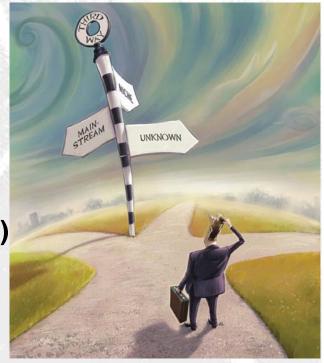
- 1970's-80's beginning
- Countrysides of all types
- Not resort based: Villages, farms, real rural life
- Private car
- Reaction to mass tourism
- Majority of individual suppliers
- Lack of organized networks
- Little professionalization
- Beginners luck
- Weak business strategy
- Simple products
- Rural restructuring & diversification



Rural tourism – in a transition phase

- **Changing environments from the 1990s**
 - Changes in market
 - Stronger competition
 - Need to improve product
 - Ageing infrastructure and operators
 - Tourism and rural development
- The new tourism foreshadowed (Poon 1993)
 - Information technology
 - Changing consumer requirements





Postmodern tourism foreshadowed (Urry 1988)

Challenge 1 – A changing market

- Rural idyll, heritage, fresh air, healthy values
- More experienced and sophisticated
- Higher educated and wealthier
- Multiple holidays
- Ageing but active travellers
- Many niche markets



Challenge 2 – Growing competition

- Internationally and domestic
- Low cost providers
- New forms of tourism
 - City tourism
 - Heritage tourism
 - Cruise tourism



Challenge 3 – Improve quality and coordination

Product

- Special and authentic?
- New product development?
- Quality assurance?
- Longer holidays?

Coordination

- Network and partnerships?
- Slow dissemination of changes?
- Governance issues?



Challenge 4 – Ageing operators and infrastructure

Operators

- Recruitment
- Small-scale enterprises
- Farm tourism issues
- Idealism and low profit

Infrastructure

- Organizational and marketing
- Physical development (signs, buildings, paths, visitors centers)
- Who pays, who plans?



Challenge 5 – Unfullfilled expectations

The role of tourism in rural development

- Panacea for rural areas in decline?
- Both agent and object in rural development

Still need for rural tourism:

- Economic vitality
- Justify conservation
- Retain rural lifestyles
- Support survival of agriculture & landscape
- Rural living as an alternative to urban living



Problem statement and objectives

- The main research question is: How can rural tourism in Norway become more socially and economically robust and environmentally sustainable?
 - How could rural tourism firms respond to the challenges?
 - What do the rural tourism firms define as their main challenges?
 - What changes in rural tourism are needed, and what is possible?
 - Would those changes qualify for the title of second generation rural tourism?

Methods

- Literature study
- Case studies in two norwegian counties
 - Sør-Trøndelag farming region, city of Trondheim
 - Sogn og Fjordane fjords and glacier, long traditions of tourism
- The classic rural tourism enterprises in Sogn og Fjordane (preliminary)
 - Tourist hotels
 - Farm tourism
 - Self catering units: cottages and houses
- Cover the time span from 1970s and until today



Practical approaches

- We need more knowledge of the market
- We need to better understand how rural tourism businesses work, think and might work together
- We need to ask questions about how they might work locally, regionally and nationally in the internet future

Thank you for your attention!

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