

MARKETING ACTIVITIES OF KAPOSVÁR UNIVERSITY'S DEER FARM

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ABSTRACT

In 1985 a research program started at Kaposvár University to examine the possibilities of breeding deer under farming circumstances in Hungary. Owing to conscious developmental work and a continuous increase in wild game numbers, the deer population has become the largest in Hungary in the hands of a single owner. Over the past 25 years, numerous professional successes and new scientific results have been achieved here. The discovery of different marketing possibilities has been an important aspect of our work from the beginning. Based on experiences in New Zealand, we produced game and velvet antlers first, then moved into the fields of breeding and hunting. Income from these activities allowed the farm to expand continuously for a decade. During this time we built our own game processing plant, where we began to process and sell game in 2004. In the past three years, the sale of live animals has taken a back seat to quality meat production and hunting. The sight of deer has always been a great attraction, and an increasing number of visitors come to the farm to get acquainted with different types of wild game and to learn about hunting and game management. During a visit our guests can taste delicious specialties made of game, an important element in introducing our products and services. Today we coordinate the whole production process from grassland management to hosting in Bőszénfa. We have the opportunity to oversee our products and services at every level. With the direct marketing of different products we hope to put our products proudly on the table of even the most demanding customers.

Keywords: game management, red deer selling, game meat, hunting, tourism

INTRODUCTION

The Game Management Centre has been dealing with keeping and breeding game for 26 years. During this time it has become one of Europe's most interesting and diverse Game Management centre.

At the start the stock consisted of 9 red deer which were raised as a part of a research programme, fed by people using nursing bottles. The small livestock was then transferred to Bőszénfa, here many activities joined teaching and research, while the number of animals constantly grew. In 1997 a hunting area was formed in 600 hectares, where red deer and wild boars were brought first, then red deer were sold as breeding animals. At the first 13 years the antlers were sold as velvet (cut) antlers to the Far Eastern market. It was a very profitable activity in the 90s, but we decided to stop the production because of the considerable price cut. An opposing tendency

could be observed in the number of hunting guests and the number of game shot, which was growing consistently after the first period. From the point of view of hunting it is a great advantage that the deer-park of the Game Management Centre is located in an excellent area full of big game. This area has always been famous for the quality and quantity of red deer living here. At first it was a disadvantage that guests can not hunt in an open area here. Although this form of hunting has been more sought after in recent years, because in today's rush guests have less time for hunting, and here the trophy can be shot in a shorter time than in an open area. As Nagy point out in the SWOT analysis made in 2007, the low level of marketing is one of the weaknesses of the South-Transdanubian Region but one of the opportunities could be the increase of the market share (meat, trophy, hunting), the quality of big game, the development of eco- and hunting tourism in the local and international level, and the increase of its role in regional development.

Meanwhile we started selling shot game, and aimed at starting an own game processing plant and sales network. This initiative came to life in 2003, when we won funding to form "Zselicvad" game processing plant which employs 4 people and capable of processing 800-1200 big game. The plant processes meat at a manufactory-level. Stepping beyond game meat processing, we have started manufacturing dry products, such as deer- and wild boar ham, deer salami and two kinds of sausages in 2004. These foodstuff are traditional country food made exclusively from local raw material (bought from hunting companies in Bószénfa and its area) using traditional technologies. *Kovács et al.* in their 2003 work point out that these foods may present a special breakout opportunity for Hungarian agriculture, since they are products of unique, historical sectors, the development of which connect to environment and land management and tasks connected with tourism, employment, rural development and income support. *Szigeti et al.* (2009) claim that the market place and role of traditional and country food –parallel with the changing market environment – is primarily determined by the food consumer's behavior. The consumption of the above mentioned products has initially appeared as a gap in the market, but present experience shows that their market share continually increases corresponding the changes of market environment. The change in the roles of food consumption provides appreciation for the range and role of regional products. This process does not happen automatically, but it requires considerable company and social marketing (*Watts et al.*, 2005).

Parallel with the extension of activities there was an increasing interest towards farm visits, firstly from professional circles, then from groups of visitors and families. We have opened our gates to public in 2000. The infrastructure needed for hospitality did not exist at the beginning, and it is still being developed, since this activity was brought about by the development of other branches. We are not talking about a game park created for visitors. On the other hand the establishment's touristic attraction is considerable, as the increasing number of visitors shows. The attraction is so vast, that the number of guests could be multiplied with the cooperation of other tourism providers in the area, conscious regional management, deliberate marketing strategy, the development of the conditions and different facilities. In our case tourism facilitates the selling of local products, because we offer programs

combined with food tasting and meals. On the other hand our game meat products and food present a touristic attraction at the same time.

The aim of our present study is to examine the management of different branches – breeding stock, trophy hunting, game meat and tourism - based on sales data and to give an overview of our marketing activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All data originates from the database of the *Game Management Landscape Center*.

Marketing tools shown in *Table 1* have been applied successively, supplementing each-other, taking account of the target groups.

Table 1

Marketing tools

Activity	Period	Target group	Marketing tools applied
Selling of Red Deer	2005-2010	Game breeders, game managers, national parks	Personal contact, representatives and companies, printed marketing (flyers, advertisements, professional events)
Hunting	2006-2010	hunters	Market analysis, Hunting management offices, discount for returning guests, causal offers for hunting, internet (homepage, advertisements)
Game meat selling – venison - (kg)	2003-2004, 2009-2010	Quality restaurants, hotels, individual customers, visitors	Market analysis, product sample, advertising (papers, tv, radio, poster), homepage, special packaging, exhibitions
Number of visitors (person)	2009-2010	Professional, kindergarten, school groups, work groups, families, groups of friends	Tourism offices, visiting kindergartens and schools, printed and online advertisements, events, discounted entry fees

In the case of red deer selling the indicator numbers were the numbers kept in the population-count books, data pertaining to the hunting of individual species are kept in the game management plans and hunting logs. Selling of the game meat processing plant are recorded based on invoices and expenditures, guest-count is registered on the base of check-ins, internal accounts, and invoices.

Some channels of breeding-animal sales involved visits of intermediary companies and individuals, since this area affects only a small circle. A bigger portion of valuable animals were transported abroad (to Europe and countries outside

Europe) by customers. The process of sales is difficult because of the animal health and customs regulations, therefore in this area it is vitally important to keep good contact with intermediary people and personal contact.

Because hunting tourism is so special, selling is most expedient through hunting-organization companies, since there is no other way of getting the hunters to the target only through these companies, and printed and electronic press and exhibitions.

According to *Feiszt* (2007), hunting tourism as a special part of tourism has a hundred-year-old tradition. Hungarian hunts have proved to be very marketable tourism products in the past fifty years, especially for European, but among American hunters as well. Hunters arriving to our country are interested in different game depending on which nation the hunter is from. If they come from the Mediterranean Sea they look for small-game hunt, hunters from areas where the German language is spoken, from the Benelux countries, and Scandinavia look for big game to hunt. Nowadays there is an increased interest from EU countries such as Slovakia or the Czech Republic, first of all from the Baltic countries and Russia.

Reacting to market needs we have enlarged our supply in 2005 and now apart from red deer and wild boar we offer the possibility of hunting fallow deer and mouflon.

We wish to take venison and meat product to wider audiences. Plant manager *Kilvinger* in his article (2010) points out that selling is determined by the gourmet, who requires a particular quality of product. These people induce considerable developments both individually and through the hospitality industry. The other important segment is the circle of healthy eaters, who look for products made using traditional technologies, these products are bought in delicatessen shops. For Zselicvad there is a third channel, arising from its special situation that is selling the products connected to touristic events and building on impulsive shopping.

The newest products of the Game Management Centre are the touristic programmes which started with personal visits (schools, nurseries, travel agencies), then in the following years we tried to reach potential customers through many channels, such as printed and on-line press, organizing events (open days) and appearing in exhibitions. In this case there was no market research, because we provide interesting programme for all age groups from nursery school children to pensioners. The majority of visitors, about 90% arrive from Hungary.

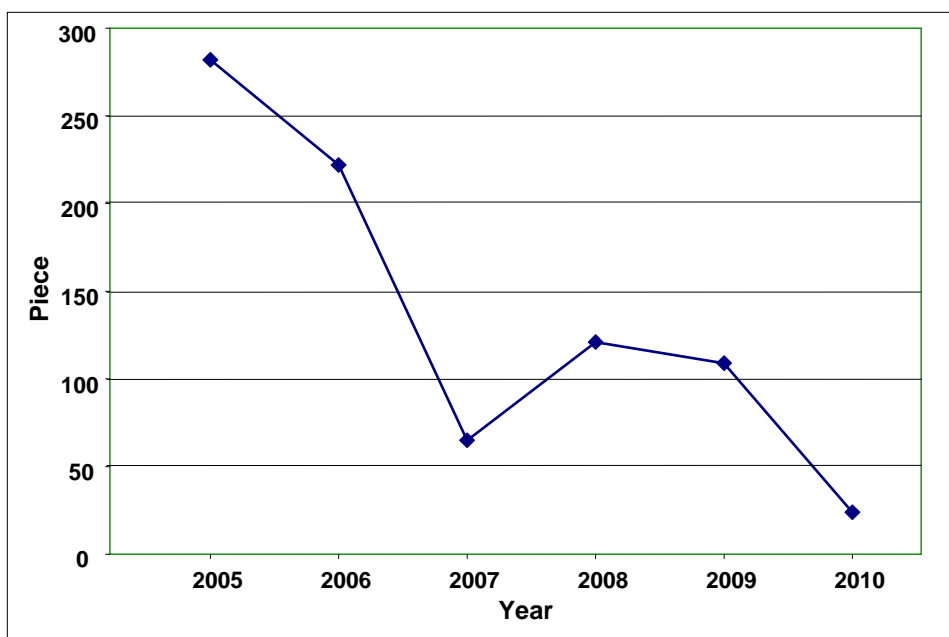
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The trend of selling breeding animals is shown on *Figure 1*.

We were consciously decreasing the selling of breeding animals, because in the meantime our own population needed rejuvenation. The other reason of selling less breeding animals was the fact that by the end of the 90s, at the beginning of 2000s after privatization, the process of creating game parks has already finished. We have sold about 90% of the deer through intermediaries, the remaining 10% was bought by gamekeepers or game breeders. Game we sold was taken mainly to Europe, but considerable mounts of animals were taken to countries outside Europe.

Figure 1

Trends of deer sale between 2005 and 2010



The number and ration of hunters is shown in *Table 2*. The change of bag size is shown on *Figure 2*.

In 2006 and 2010 the ratio of Hungarian hunters was over 65%, owing to the fact that in that year we offered a hunting programme specifically for Hungarian hunters and this was advertised on the web. This process gave us the possibility of selection. The result shows in the number of red deer shot in 2010, but in that year more non-trophy wild game were shot than trophy deer. There was a slight decrease in 2007 and 2009 which can be observed in the number of Red Deer shot, while the number of wild boar did not show big differences apart from the big numbers in 2007 and 2010.

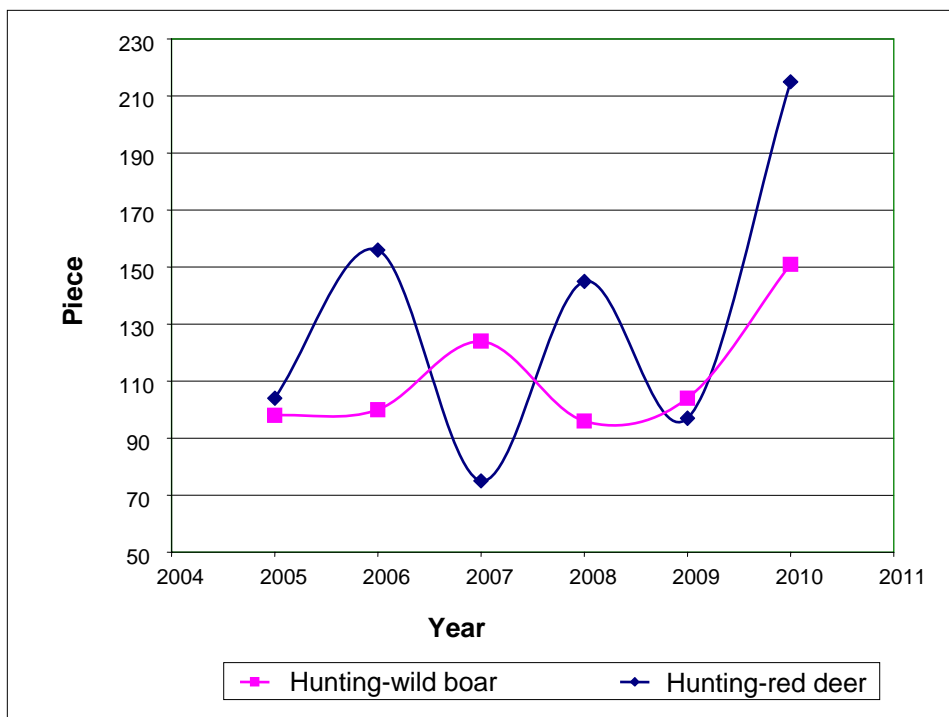
Table 2

The number and distribution of the hunting guests

Guest	2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%	person	%
Hungarian	88	67.7	25	26.6	43	36.1	35	35.0	87	60.4
German	30	23.1	52	55.3	56	47.1	43	43.0	31	21.5
Other	12	9.2	17	18.1	20	16.8	22	22.0	26	18.1
Sum	130	100	94	100	119	100	100	100	144	100

Figure 2

The size of bag between 2005 and 2010



On the other hand we can not disregard the situation of the market – supply and demand – and the change in the number of stock, since (apart from disposal) many years may pass till one animal becomes „ready for the bullet”.

The main activity of the game meat processing plant has been the production and selling of excellent-quality game meat from the start. Taking into consideration that the valuable products of Zselicvad are consumed by exquisite restaurants, the plant tried to form a relationship based on confidence with them. It resulted in the gradual shift of selling focus into restaurants (*Figure 3* and *Figure 4*).

This confidence relationship bears great importance in the case of marketing other game products as well. The opening of the game meat shop in Kaposvár had great marketing value in Kaposvár and the area for “Zselicvad” and its products. The shop has been advertised to the local public through local radio stations and printed media. The selling of the meat processing plant have gradually increased till 2008, but they dropped in 2009, because of the economic crisis, since they are very high-quality products. In 2010 selling increased again due to product development, new selling processes (forefronting private buyers). This tendency continued in 2011.

The number and distribution of visitors in 2009 and 2010 is shown in *Table 4*.

Figure 3

Trading channels of the Zselicvad game meat processing plant in 2003 and 2004

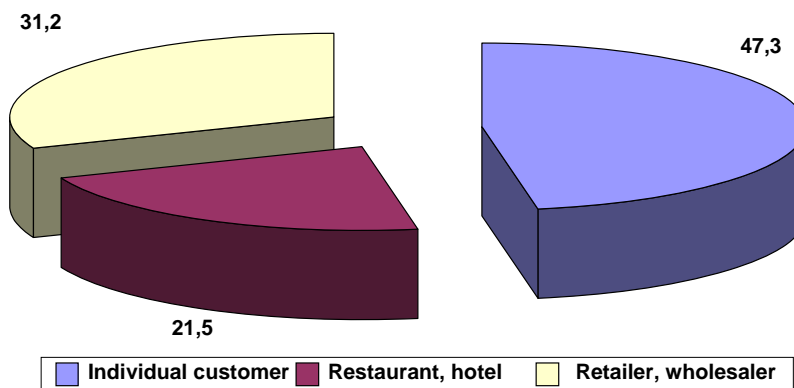


Figure 4

Trading channels of the Zselicvad game meat processing plant in 2009 and 2010

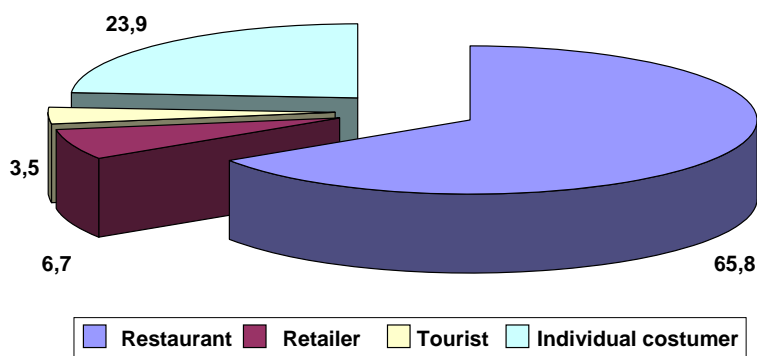


Table 4

The number of visitors in 2009 and 2010

Guests	2009		2010	
	person	%	person	%
Children from kindergartens and schools	2858	29.2	1995	33.3
Adult visitors	3472	35.5	1054	17.6
Families	3012	30.8	2308	38.6
Professional visitors	452	4.5	625	10.5
Sum	9794	100	5982	100

The number of guests registered in 2009 is extraordinarily high (we only have estimates of these), which is the result of contracting a travel agency that increased the number of adult visitors that year. This office brought 4-5 bus-load of guests for three weeks to the Bőszénfa Landscape Center. Although in 2010 there was a 39% decrease compared to the previous year that year's numbers are still very high in comparison with the visitor numbers of 2008 and 2007. In the past two years (2009, 2010) we have organized several events, which were all advertised in printed and electronic media, furthermore many television channels made promotional films of the farm and they all had positive impact on the number of guests. The way visitors get information of the farm has always been an important piece of information for us, therefore we have always asked this from the guests. based on the experience of the past two years 35% of the guests heard about the farm from acquaintances, 30% saw it on the net, 15% read about it in printed press, 12% saw fliers or posters at their accommodation, or heard about us there (hotel, guest house) and 8% got information about us from other sources.

CONCLUSIONS

In the selling of breeding animals intermediaries played the most important role in the past decade, this channel will probably stay the same in this area, but the widespread familiarity with the branch requires us to develop. Because of the good standing, the English language materials and the webpage customers find us easier; therefore it is worth thinking about developments in these areas.

The majority of hunting possibilities are sold through hunting organizer agencies and personal connections, moreover the cheaper hunting packages advertised on the internet were sold in a very short time, so this channel might play an important role in selling culling, although occasionally a valuable trophy might be sold this way. Foreign-language information materials, price lists and information on the web bear with great importance in this area as well, here interested people may gain information about the possibilities available in the Landscape Centre. It would be desirable to appear in one or two well-known hunting exhibitions abroad.

In order to increase the financial results of the game processing plant, we should use the capacity of the plant better, and at the same time use the investment better. In the future top-category restaurants might remain the most important customers. At the same time we have to increase the number of well-off customers and the ones with a fine taste. To achieve this, it is desirable to use the possibilities provided by the internet more.

In the tourism branch groups (adults and children) present the majority of visitors, but the rate of visiting families approached 39% last year, and this tendency is expected to rise, therefore we should lay greater emphasis on our appearance in the printed and on-line press. The number of groups, especially the ones consisting of foreign visitors, may be increased by contacting travel agencies specialized in inbound tourism.

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