

# Between horsemanship and hostmanship: the making of a horse-farm professionalism

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# The aim is to analyze...

...the making of a horse-based hospitality professionalism and to elucidate the complexities in a three-part service relationship; the host, guest & horse



# The study context

...Tour-riding, riding schools, lodging stables, Stay on Farm, B&B...

Two types of horse-based hospitality:

”Hospitality with horses ” & ”Horses with hospitality”

Displaying an "in-between professionalism"  
(between work and lifestyle, between  
horsemanship and hostmanship):

## *1. Serving horses, serving people*

Emphasising horsemanship by  
downplaying economic motifs ("you  
must love horses", "an eye for horses")

*We had to cut down because  
we had too many horses,  
they became money-  
machines...*

Emphasising hostmanship by  
downplaying economic motifs ("you  
must love people", "an eye for people")

*I have this Shetland pony  
and children can ride for  
100 kr, but then the whole  
family comes and its fun,  
but when I think about it, it  
takes a lot of time... and  
for only 100 kr...(laughter)*

Sacrificing horses for the benefit of  
customers, and sacrificing customers for  
the benefit of horses

The emotional labour of match-making

# Methodology and analytical perspectives

Ethnographic interviews with horse-farmers, walk-along (work-along) interviews, on-site observations and observations of websites (homepages of horse-farms)

An interactionist perspective and a narrative analytical approach: How is professionalism displayed? How is professionalism articulated, performed and "made" in a situated social reality?

# The wider socio-economic framework...

An emerging professionalization process in small scale rural tourism and hospitality industry (new educational programmes, government support programmes, rural consultants specializing in tourism enterprises)

An emerging professionalization discourse, or "social visibility" of horse-based enterprising

Article in the rural business magazine ATL:

*"What is most difficult for new horse business owners is to find customers that pay the right price"*

*...says Ann-Mari Paulsson, consultant at LRF Konsult in Ängelholm. She has been coaching new horse-business owners.(...)* Most of

Displaying an "in-between"  
professionalism (between the  
business-like and the personal):

## *2. Embracing and rejecting formalities*

Displaying safety (certifications,  
signs in the stable and on the  
websites)

Rejecting too much formalism,  
the ability to build trust is  
important

Money is a sensitive issue  
(ambiguity concerning prices and  
the display of prices)

*Safety always comes  
first!  
I think that many in this  
business try to be  
strict, if you look at the  
rules on how to book  
and cancel on the  
websites... It look so  
terribly boring! I don't  
do that, I don't believe  
in that... Because I  
trust people...*

Displaying an "in-between professionalism"  
(between workplace & home):

### 3. *Commercial home management*

Blurring boundaries, holistic  
management

The art of networking and  
maintaining a network of  
staff/friends

The ability to delegate/ask for  
help (to friends/volunteers)  
and to know when you  
shouldn't

*You have to learn how to  
ask for help. That is the  
difficult part, very  
difficult. But if you are  
nice and care about  
people, they will help  
you. It is as simple as  
that. That's the way it  
works: I scratch your  
back and you scratch  
mine. And lots of people  
that wants to work in this  
business do it for free.  
But you can only accept*

# Some conclusions

- Horse-farmers perform an in-between professionalism: between work & lifestyle, horsemanship & hostmanship, the business-like and the personal, workplace & home
- A tension is maintained and a balancing act performed through:
  - emphasising both horsemanship and hostmanship by downplaying economic motifs
  - managing a triadic social relationship (knowing when to sacrifice one for the other, emotional work of matchmaking)
  - balancing the formal versus the informal
  - the inherent ambivalence in the role of money/the act of pricing and purchase (economic rationality and emotional trigger in social interaction)
  - holistic, commercial home management and boundary work of commercial/personal relationships

Thank you for listening!  
Questions? Suggestions?