**STATE AND PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT OF COUNTRYSIDE TOURISM IN SERBIA**

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**Abstract:***Rural tourism in Serbia continuously grows as one of the most important and profitable supplementary activities, though the more successful countryside households consider it the main activity. This work points out basic indicators of development of rural tourism. The subject of research is study of rural tourism in general. The aim of this work is to emphasize possibilities for development of countryside tourism that can be found in rural areas.*

**Keywords:**tourism, village, activities, development, perspectives

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Appearance of new trends resulted in the increased demand for special types of tourism (cultural, manifestational, rural, etc.), which is based on desire of modern man to return to nature and tradition. Appearance of rural tourism is realized by needs of tourists to meet habits and customs of other cultures. This type of tourism attracts great attention by tourists, not only as a weekend-stay type of tourism, but also as an extraordinary place for a longer vacation. Rural areas that used to be undeveloped and uninteresting for tourists until recently, have now become the center of attention. Although the official data are still missing, according to some statistics 25% of tourists from all over the world opt for rural tourism. Tourists are most often attracted by villages where agriculture is marginal activity, as well as those which are rarely populated, isolated and scattered around the hill. Rural tourism is specific type of tourism in which the main motif of travelling is “return of man to nature”. This type of tourism includes not only tourism in village households, but also certain vacations in nature, excursions around rural areas, visit to manifestations, festivals and similar.

This type of tourism is very often related to terms like rural, agritourism, ecotourism. Agritourism implies stay in the village with active participation in all agricultural works for the educational purpose (i.e. growing of vine, making of winter stores…). Ecotourism implies stay in untouched and preserved nature. Rural area is a complete antithesis to city area, which primarily served as life and work space for farmers. That is where traditional village arose, as well as architecture and interior, courtyards and gardens and also traditional culture of farmers’ life and work, national dance, songs, etc. Rural area is ecological space, which is economically and culturally specific and diverse. Variety of touristic activities can be performed in such areas and that is the reason why rural tourism presents the most complex type of contemporary tourism. This type of tourism has its tradition: it was popular in Europe by the end of 18th century when individuals were seeking for idyllic village as their “shelter”. Yet, only at the end of the 20th century it gets the real touristic features. Some mountain areas that famous for rural tourism were first developed as winter centers later visited by other tourists throughout the whole year. There are also examples of revitalization of basically desolate villages, where people from nearby cities bought and rebuilt old stone houses. This kind of tourism is very significant component of sustainable development of tourism and revitalization of villages. It should make contribution to preservation of cultural heritage and rural environment, but also to motivate and to keep local residents in the village.

1. **KEY QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM**

Tourism as global social-economicaccomplishes constant and stable growth in the last few decades. Having this in mind, tourism is going through the process of continuous changes. These changes affected the need for new contemplations related to development of tourism based on protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources. Development of tourism and emphasizing of social costs of development are based on these changes. The point is the use of concept of sustainable development of tourism, i.e. creation of sustainable world through tourism. Development of tourism on the countryside in unpolluted natural environment represents one of the basic factors of use of such concept of development of tourism.

There are three main characteristics that determine the area as rural:

1. Density of population and size of the settlement.

Low density of population and relatively small settlements are facts that determine an area as rural one. Concrete sizes vary from region to region and from country to country. It is considered that rural area with lower density of population and which is of smaller size of settlement is more attractive to tourists.

1. The way of work and utilazation of land

Traditional non-city and non-industrial utilazation of land, i.e. the way of work which is based on agriculture, forestry and usage of raw materials is typical for rural areas. Insufficiently developed rural areas based on traditional agricultural production of smaller volume turn out to be more attractive for tourists.

1. Traditionality of social structure

Key elements of rural tourism:

* Located in rural areas; -contact with nature, heritage, traditional societies and traditional practice; - allowes participation in the activities, tradition and way of life of local residents; -provides personalized contact; -rural in a sense of buildings and settlements; -usually of a smaller size; -has traditional character and is connected to local families; -variety of types, it presents complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location; -high percentage of income from tourism and benefits to rural community.
* Potential tourists who originate from city environment categorize rural areas primarily according to level of traditionality of social structures and commonly social values which do not exist in city centers anymore. Rural areas are characterized by the strong feeling of community above all and way of life which is slower and less complicated than way of life in cities. Interest of modern tourist in cultural heritage of rural areas gets bigger and bigger.

The basic motifs for directing tourists towards rural areas can be desire for stay in preserved natural environment and feeling of freedom, authenticity and tradition. Heterogeneity and complexity of tourst demand directed towards rural areas condition the tourist offer to be complex, as well. Rural tourism is recognizable for great number of participants on tourist offer side, i.e. in forming of a tourist product. One of the most important segments within tourist product is dealing with tourism inside agricultural households (farm tourism). It can be realized through provision of accommodation, setting up of camp area, opening of the restaurants and sale of agricultural products.

The development of this type of rural tourism depends on three factors: the level of income that the household provides on the basis of agricultural production, the existence of tourist resources and accessibility. An important advantage of development is evident in securing income from tourism to rural areas with minimal investment by farmers themselves.

In order for a tourist product of rural tourism to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism, it needs to be locally controlled, small volume, based on authenticity. It should include accommodation with a local village family, visits to places of work in the countryside (farms, folk arts ...), participation in everyday leisure activities, local food tasting and familiarization with the preparation of traditional meals, conversation with older members of the rural community About rural life in the past.

Rural tourism has various manifestations:

1. Social - as a contact of the urban and rural population;

2. Ecological - as an awareness of the ecological and natural values that are presumed to be preserved in the village;

3. Economically - as an opportunity to generate additional income of the rural population.

Rural capital includes the various components of the village axis. These can be primarily natural components (plant and animal life), primarily built or primarily social (local cultural traditions). Resources are an integral part of the rural capital: landscape, plant and animal world, biodiversity, air and air quality, geology and land, agricultural buildings, streams, rivers, ponds and lakes, historical characteristics, forests and plantations, local customs, languages, Food, crafts, traditions, festivals, etc.

**Market segment of rural tourism** - Research on rural tourism little talk about types of tourists. There are 4 segments of tourists: 1. Tourists want all - interested in a wide range of activities; For them, it is important that they can work in that environment, not the middle itself; Traveling in groups, are relatively young. 2. Independent tourists - their interests are walks, discovering the region on their own initiative; Rely on the recommendations of others when choosing a destination; They are aware of the price and quality. 3. Romantic tourists - value culture and tradition and peaceful and unpolluted environment, are more interested in the very concept of rurality than for activities; They are the largest consumers and loyal destinations. 4. External rural people - put a less emphasis on culture and tradition; Like activities like riding horses and biking; Are relatively young; Spend breaks in groups; They spend a little bit and rely on recommendations.

1. **ACTIVITIES OF TOURISTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

Organizing a contentive stay in the village is one of the most important elements of a quality offer, of crucial importance for the return of tourists. However, it is also the biggest challenge that households can encounter. All the activities of rural tourists can be divided into: 1. Domestic hosted activities 2. Activities outside the household that can be created by hosts but also by other households, various associations, local tourist organizations, etc.

Activities of tourists in a rural household - Here you can distinguish three basic types of activities:

1. agricultural activities

2. food preparation - gastronomic activities

3. craft works

**Agricultural activities**: Our villages are attractive and attractive in all four seasons (although at least in winter) and these climate characteristics should be used as an advantage for tourism in the countryside. In our country, households are combined - their priority is agriculture, and tourism is their subsidiary activity, although in some households they become a primary activity. Peasants are engaged in farming, fruit growing, livestock farming, cultivating the land. Thus, the offer should be tailored to everyday life in the countryside, without disturbing the steady flow of rural activities. The village should definitely keep the traditional way of dealing with agriculture and this is exactly how the tourist offer of the village should be formed. Guests can participate actively in rural work - picking raspberries, blackberries, sour cherries, harvesting corn, gathering hay, working on fields or on a farm, smelling herbs, watching and if they want to participate in a husband's cow, making cheese and milk, To prepare a winter, sweet and jam, which, with some kind of compensation, the housekeepers could bring home. They could help hosts learn many useful jobs, old crafts, attend a scene of baking brandy with a bowl or real homemade wine ...

**Gastronomic activity** - food preparation: The advantage of the rural environment is pure and unpolluted nature that allows the production of organic and healthy food. Given that food is being imported a lot, we should strive for households to produce food for the needs of tourists themselves. Valuable housekeepers foster traditional food preparation. They could organize education in the preparation of gastronomic specialties of local cuisine, which are less and less popular on city meals. Pies (eg from buckwheat, cabbage, pumpkin, cheese ...), gibanica, proja, homemade bread, specific dishes and baked buns, delicacies. Taking local cuisine creates a unique ambience of hospitality and welcome. The ritual of the village lunch has many specificities - business with the national table, words, toasts ... which creates an authentic and relaxing atmosphere.

**Craft works:** Part of the folk heritage is home-made crafts and crafts, especially artistic, making souvenirs, folk costume and folklore. In addition to the basic boarding offer, additional content should be created that will keep the guests, creating additional profit and positive economic effects. There are more and more guests who want to actively spend their vacation, to learn something new, find out, find out. Life and customs in the village can be realized through domestic work, folk architecture, gastronomy, customs, and this enables a man from the urban environment to relax. There are old preserved villages in which as if the weather is dying, old waterfalls that need to be restored, many abandoned buildings.



**Photo 1:** Agricultural activities - picking raspberries **Photo 2:** Gastronomic activities

Activities of tourists outside the rural household

Tourists are no longer only peaceful observers but active participants in everyday activities. It is no longer just to see the destination, it is necessary to experience the destination. Tourists are hungry for new experiences, and experiences are created by activities in the destination.

Natural motives→Recreational activities

Cultural motives→Sightseeing, observing, getting acquainted, photographing ...

**Photo 3:** Activities of tourists outside the household

For natural motives, predominantly recreational activities that involve physical activity of visitors are associated. For the mountains, as natural geomorphological motifs, the following activities are connected: hiking, trekking, alpinistic activities, cycling, skiing and winter sports, paragliding, hunting, etc. For anthropogenic (cultural) motifs, physical passive activities such as acquaintance, sightseeing, observation, photography (churches, monuments, monasteries ...) are associated. So all activities outside of the household can be classified into two groups: recreational and cultural activities.

Recreational activities - Recreational function is most often realized through staying and recreation in nature, without making any major mental effort. For every guest, each type of activity is a new experience and attractive to them, and walks of jade, through the forests and pastures, along the streams and rivers. Most villages have a school in the school sports grounds that can be offered to guests for recreation. During the winter months, the snow cover is an idyllic picture of the village so that the offer for winter sportswomen - skiing and sledding - can be arranged, or that the guests drive with sledges that draw horses and the like. There are numerous extreme sports fans (eg SUVs, bikers, mountaineers, canyons) who want to stay in untouched nature for as long as possible. In many villages, paths are adapted for sports recreation, some are properly marked with tourist signs. Hunting and fishing are specific forms of sports tourism. It is a special target group of guests, who has special requirements when staying, and are related to a stay in the nature near the hunting ground or a river rich in fish during the hunting season. Hunting and fishing associations should be involved in the formation of the offer, as these activities must be coordinated with the shooting and fishing calendar. Guests can also enjoy the use of healing waters in surrounding spa centers, and the offer can be combined with preventive treatment, recovery and rehabilitation.



**Photo 4:** Recreational activities – riding **Photo 5:** Recreational activities – hiking

Cultural activities - Cultural activities outside the rural household are mainly related to visits and tours of monasteries, monuments, ambient units, etc. This group includes participation in folklore customs within various manifestations. Tourists are especially attractive customs in the villages during certain holidays. Country glory, fairies, traditional songs and games through which the spirit of past times provokes, the advantages of the rural environment for dealing with tourism.

1. **PLANNING AND MANAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM**

The complexity of tourism as a business and social activity determines that the planning and management of the development of tourism are specific and require special organization at all levels. The existence of appropriate resources for the development of tourism and tradition in the development of rural tourism are the basis for distinguishing three specific types of approaches related to the planning and management of tourism development:

- rural areas with a tradition in the development of tourism,

- rural areas with significant resources, but without enough tradition in the development of tourism,

- rural areas poor in resources and without tradition in rural tourism development.

Each of these types requires different types of approaches and strategies, with the existence of a common methodology of planning and management. One of the basic prerequisites for successful planning and managing the sustainable development of rural tourism is the active involvement of the rural community, that is, the local population, in this process. This involvement is necessary because nature, or the natural environment, represents an important factor of the overall quality of life of the inhabitants of rural areas. The existence of a balance or partnership among numerous participants in the development of rural tourism is another important factor in the success of planning and managing the development of rural tourism. The center of attention is primarily the relationship between the public and the private sector, that is, between state authorities on the one hand and, on the other, tourist companies and all other organizations that are directly and indirectly involved in the development of rural tourism. The goal of sustainable development of rural tourism is that visitors / tourists actively participate in the overall process in order to protect and preserve the natural environment and cultural and historical heritage. It is about directing of the behavior of visitors / tourists, that is, about the management of the use of total resources in rural areas by visitors / tourists. One of the most common ways to realize this impact is to publish official rules of conduct so that visitors can take part in the protection of rural tourism resources by adjusting their behavior. The process of planning the development of rural tourism begins with research. All relevant factors of tourism development, as well as the characteristics of the rural area, which have assumptions for the development of tourism, are being studied. Particular attention should be paid to: natural and socio-cultural characteristics of the area, economic development, employment, level of infrastructure development, attitude of local population towards tourism development, characteristics of competitive areas for tourism development, organizations directly or indirectly involved in tourist business, global,regional and local trends in the development of tourism and the movement of tourism and consumption. The next phase of the planning process makes defining the development goals. The goals can be different: diversification of production, increase of employment, restoration of traditional houses and buildings and others with the creation of the necessary conditions for meeting the needs, demands and wishes of visitors, that is, tourists. Then follows the phase of analysis and synthesis, ie conclusions based on the results of the research. They relate specifically to natural and cultural - historical resources. Through the synthesis process, data on the relationship between the number of tourists and the possibilities of space, as well as the necessary services, facilities and recreational facilities for tourists should be provided. At the stage of drafting proposals and recommendations, the developmental alternatives offered in relation to the defined goals of tourism development, the influence on the local community and other factors are compared and based on that, plans and policies are formulated and recommendations are formulated. These recommendations should be based on the following aspects of tourism development: space, program definition, policy formulation. The implementation and management phase is a process of continuous checking of the degree of achievement of the defined goals. It should be based on determining the degree of satisfaction of tourists, assessing the realized economic effects, assessing the overall impacts of tourism development on the natural and socio - cultural environment. A special aspect of managing the development of rural tourism is reflected in the need to educate personnel. It is understood that the development of tourism should lead to an increase in employment related to the provision of products and services for tourists, and to the provision of additional salaries for already employed on the basis of seasonal employment. In order to achieve this in a quality way, key stakeholders need to be educated in meeting the needs of tourists. These are, first of all, the hosts, owners of houses for renting the tourists, small hotels, restaurants, campgrounds - they need to educate them about the needs of tourists, refer them to knowledge about management, bookkeeping, providing conditions for recreation of guests, safety, ways of maintaining hygiene for tourists, as well as to expand their knowledge of the natural, cultural and other characteristics of their area; the entire local population - in order to participate in the realization of a joint project of rural tourism development; staff in local tourist information centers, local tourist guides and animators - in order to gain wide knowledge about the characteristics of the area, especially tourist resources, ways of promoting tourist products, recreational techniques, etc.

1. **WHAT IS THE LAW ON TOURISM?**

Rural tourism services are the provision of accommodation and meals in rural households, ethno-estates and farms; organizing of hiking tours, collecting of medicinal herbs, riding, fishing and other thematic activities; tasting and selling products; preparing and serving traditional dishes with compensation; production and sale of folk handicrafts, as well as organized activities to learn about the heritage, way of life and traditional culture of rural areas (Article 81). A household person in the rural area, organized as a rural tourist household, can provide accommodation, as well as preparing and serving food and drinks to tourists up to a maximum of 30 beds. A rural tourist household can provide the services of preparing and serving food and beverages from predominantly own production and tasting of own household products to organized tourist groups that do not use accommodation services. In the rural tourist household, they can sell their own made folk handicrafts, as well as organize activities to learn about the heritage, the way of life and the traditional culture of rural areas (Article 107). The physical person rents the houses, apartments, apartments and rooms using a local tourist organization, a tourist agency or a business registered for performing a catering activity, on the basis of a contract. The physical person shall submit the contract referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article to the competent authority of the local self-government unit (Article 105). The accommodation provider collects the residence tax at the same time as the payment for accommodation services. If the accommodation provider does not collect the residence tax, he / she is obliged to pay the amount of the unpaid residence tax on his / her burden (Article 38).

1. **THE STATE AND PERSPECTIVES OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SERBIA**

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) recommends Serbia to develop rural tourism. The Strategy on the development of tourism in Serbia envisages significant activities in this form of tourism and gives it priority. Rural tourism in Serbia should contribute preserving the rural environment and cultural heritage, but also to economically motivate the local population to stay in the countryside. This type of tourism could also significantly contribute to the protection of nature, but also provides resources for the survival and development of the villages. The development of tourism in the villages of Serbia, as an organized activity, began more than a quarter of a century ago. The very beginnings of tourism development in the countryside are related to the spontaneous movement of tourists, who wanted to escape from the city, ecologically disturbed environment and spend some time in nature. Initially, this type of tourism was dealt with by only individual households. The development of tourist activity in the villages of Serbia since the 1970s was initially not accompanied by adequate stimulus measures, it was not given the corresponding importance. In 2006 according to the Tourist Organization of Serbia there was an organized tourist turnover in rural tourism in 18 municipalities in Serbia . 140 households with about 750 beds in 44 villages were registered. An average of 408 580 overnight stays are occurring in the hurdle of rural tourism in Serbia. Domestic visitors make up almost 100% of all visitors of rural tourism. According to the data from 2016, an average of about one million nights in rural tourism is realized, while the share of foreign tourists makes up about 20%.

An important advantage of rural tourism development is reflected in the realization of rural household income with minimal investment. Households that, in addition to agriculture, are mainly engaged in tourism, sell their products at the most favorable, retail prices because tourists themselves come to the goods. A large number of villages are located near valuable cultural and historical monuments with characteristics of a particular area. In Serbia there are more tourist manifestations, by the roads of wine and brandy, hundreds of rakijada, prsutijada, cabbage ...

Offer by region: 1. Vojvodina - the most developed offer, salaš tourism, organized tourist offer; 2. Western Serbia - emphasis on eco-tourism, organized offer in strong tourist centers (Zlatibor, Užice, Tara, Valjevo); 3. Central Serbia - the beginnings of rural tourism in Serbia, extremely well organized offer, educated hosts; 4. Eastern Serbia - the most authentic offer, poorly developed, great potentials.

The most frequent guests of rural households are: -families (usually with children up to 12 years of age); - small groups traveling for some special interest (hiking, biking, tradition, folklore ...); - organized groups that come from educational reasons (students of forestry, biology, veterinary science, geography, high school students, etc.). The main seasons are spring and autumn, while significant traffic is achieved even in the summer months. The average length of stay in rural tourism cannot be accurately determined because this category is dependent on the offer of a particular rural area, as well as the desire and interest of the tourists themselves. It can be a weekend in the village, but also a two-week long stay. However, shorter stays of two to three days are increasingly frequent.

1. **WHAT CAN RURAL TOURISM BRING TO A LOCAL RURAL DESTINATION?**

1. The development of rural tourism encourages the development of agriculture as a primary activity in the countryside;

2. Rural tourism creates new jobs

3. Tourism can sell products of domestic work, which implies the development of crafts;

4. The development of rural tourism creates new business opportunities and presents a new opportunity for young people, which would reduce the emigration to the city;

5. The development of rural tourism presupposes the preservation of the natural environment (ecotourism), but also of local culture, tradition and customs (etnotourism);

6. The development of tourism would bring the village a greater chance of building better roads and improving infrastructure;

There are numerous **problems** of rural tourism, but some of them are especially emphasized:

1. Insufficient promotion of rural tourism in order to attract more tourists;

2. Non-existing and inadequate traffic infrastructure;

3. Lack of a clear concept and strategy for the development of rural tourism;

4. The lack of interest and motives of the rural population are concerned with this type of tourism;

5. Insufficient care for the preservation of the environment and natural values;

6. Lack of adequate personnel for tourist development;

7. Insufficient application of modern information and communication technologies;

8. Insufficient engagement of all entities on concrete measures for the preparation of the tourist season;

9. Insufficient education of interested rural households about the manner of accepting and animating tourists.

However, there are many **benefits**:

1. Natural tourist values;

2. Anthropogenic tourist value;

3. Affordable geographical position;

4. Hostility of the hosts;

5. Possibility of organic food production;

6. Wealth of forest fruits and medical herbs;

7. Possibility of linking mountain and rural tourism;

8. A number of manifestations;

9. Possibility to sell products of domestic work to tourists, which generates additional income.

1. **CONCLUSION**

The lack of financial resources, the reduced volume of tourists, the economic crisis, inadequate infrastructure and inadequate personnel are just some of the factors that have influenced the state of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia. The fact that 85% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia consists of rural areas, large geographical diversity (lowlands, mountainous regions), rich natural and anthropogenic resources, multiethnic population, etc. suggests that rural areas and more intensive tourism development could play a key role in the future economic development of the Republic of Serbia. In order to achieve the expected effects of rural tourism, it is necessary to plan stimulus and organizational action in the construction of the tourist offer of the villages. Also, it is necessary that the village tourism product is locally controlled, based on authenticity and promotion that highlights the real expectations of using the product. All this should lead to faster development of rural tourism in our country, which is currently below real opportunities. In Serbia, it still does not take place adequately with the opportunities it has.

The demand for this form of tourism is slowly increasing as tourists are increasingly interested in interacting with nature, getting to know new areas, people, other cultures and customs. Rural areas, which were almost uninteresting, reach the center of attention. Although there are still no complete official data, according to estimates, around 25% of tourists in the world are opting for rural tourism. This trend will continue in the future and increase demand for this type of tourism. In today's time of stress, the lack of high quality activities and time, rural tourism is a solution for escaping everyday life and provides a sense of calm, relaxation, relaxation that is contrary to the modern way of life in the urban environment. On this basis, there is a steady growth in the world. Some contemporary global trends, such as nature protection, staying in nature, as well as the preservation and revival of local traditions, customs, cultural and historical monuments, have contributed to this, all on the basis of sustainable development. We can conclude that rural tourism is not characterized by massiveness. This can happen only in rare cases when an event is held in the village. The main goal is that tourists are satisfied with their stay in the destination, and after returning they promote these products and services to their friends and relatives.

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