
RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RASINA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present the current situation in the development of rural tourism in the Rasina district, as well as to suggest possible solutions to the recorded problems. For that purpose, empirical research was conducted in Lomnica, Kupci, Kukljin, Jasika, Gornji Stepoš, Naupare, Trmčare on a sample of 288 respondents who live in these places and are engaged in agricultural work and rural tourism. The data obtained through the survey of respondents was processed and the t-test for independent samples was applied, as well as the analysis of variance. The obtained results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the attitudes of respondents in relation to gender and age. Also, it was determined that the respondents are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the area in which they live regarding the development of rural tourism. In line with this, support and cooperation of the public and private sectors are needed, to improve the existing potential.

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Introduction

Agritourism has received growing academic attention over the recent decades (Dimitrovski et al., 2019). Rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia began to develop a few decades ago. Our country is rich in natural resources and cultural assets that make rural areas very interesting for both domestic and foreign tourists. Mild climate, clean air, and water resources further enrich our rural areas. However, there are many strategic problems that need to be solved in order for rural tourism in Serbia to reach its full potential.

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Rural tourism requires a well-designed marketing approach that will give young men and women the opportunity to get an education and a job in the areas they live. The most common problems in rural areas are the lack of adequate road infrastructure, as well as signalization, in order to make it easier for tourists to stay in these places. This is also very noticeable in the rural areas of the Rasina district, which will be discussed in more detail (Perić, Dramićanin, & Gašić, 2020). Rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia can play a key role in reducing the unemployment rate, diversifying the rural economy, protecting and improving natural and cultural resources, and revitalizing the countryside (Perić, Stojiljković, & Avramović, 2018).

Rural tourism can significantly improve the economic, social, and cultural progress of rural areas, and ecotourism especially increased human concern for the state of natural resources (Voza & Fedajev, 2020). Accordingly, it is necessary to adequately manage rural tourism, so that all participants in this process are satisfied.

“Contemporary trends in world tourism are looking for places where nature is fully preserved or living environment minimally altered” (Dašić, Živković, & Vujić, 2020). The modern tourist strives to gain new experiences, get to know the customs of other peoples, and get to know their culture while staying in peaceful areas, which are opposite to the stressful, urban areas from which he comes. This provides an opportunity to develop rural tourism in our country, as it has huge potential in the form of natural and cultural resources (Škrbić, Jegdić, & Milošević, 2018).

Rural tourism in our country is developed in a small area and does not have a clear form (Vukosav, Garača, & Bradić, 2018). Therefore, these areas are not in the process of any kind of development. Rural areas around the world are facing declines due to the outflows of people and population aging, lower basic skills, education levels, and lower average productivity. An example of this is the Rasina district (Xue, & Kerstetter, 2019).

Rasina district is located in the southern part of the Republic of Serbia (Stričević et al., 2015). It has a total population of 240,463 (2011 Census). The seat of the district is the city of Kruševac. In November 2021, Kruševac and its surroundings were visited by a total of 121,727 domestic and foreign tourists (RBS, 2021) which makes the Rasina district a much-visited area in our country. If we keep in mind that there are 291 rural settlements in the district, this area is very interesting for the study of rural tourism.

Materials and methods

The subject of paper is to analyze and describe the management of rural tourism development in the Rasina district. The aim of this paper is to determine the advantages and disadvantages of rural tourism in the Rasina district, with the aim of their further development. Scientific research methods of analysis and synthesis, as well as induction, deduction, and descriptive statistical methods, were used. One general and two special hypotheses are to be compared:

General hypothesis H_0 : *Rural tourism in the Rasina district has a huge potential, but is not sufficiently developed.*

Special hypothesis H_1 : *There are no statistically significant differences in attitudes towards the development of rural tourism in the Rasina District in relation to the gender of the respondents.*

Special hypothesis H_2 : *There are no statistically significant differences in attitudes towards the development of rural tourism in the Rasina District in relation to the age of the respondents.*

For the purpose of testing the hypotheses, a survey was conducted on a sample of 288 respondents from the Rasina district who have agricultural holdings and/or are in some way engaged in rural tourism.

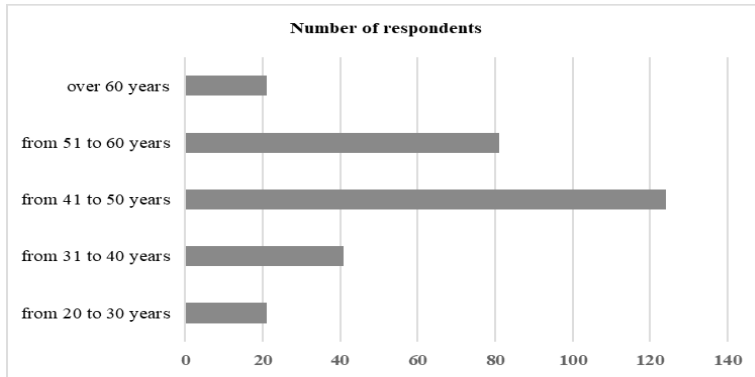
The research was conducted by the end of December 2021 and included filling in the questionnaire by the respondents. Survey data was collected using a survey technique, and the instrument is a questionnaire containing two variables related to the gender and age of the respondents. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part aims to determine the general socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of respondents, and the second part contains ten items related to the attitudes of the respondents towards the development of rural areas they live in; a five-point scale is used. The questionnaire was originally compiled by the author of this paper. The offered answers were formed according to the Likert scale. Respondents are aware that there are five degrees of agreement with each statement, namely: 1 - I do not agree; 2 - I partially disagree; 3 - I am undecided; 4 - I partially agree and 5 - I completely agree. In order to mark the agreement of their statements, it is stated that for each item, they should enter the appropriate order to mark their degree of agreement with that statement. They have been instructed to do so by writing a plus sign (+) in the appropriate place. To test the hypothesis, the t-test for independent samples was applied, as well as the analysis of variance.

Results and Discussion

The first part of the questionnaire refers to the examination of the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of respondents, i.e. gender and age structure, level of education, as well as places of residence and occupation.

The study involved 193 males and 95 females. The age structure of the total sample of respondents is shown in the following Figure 1.

Figure 1. Numerical distribution of respondents in relation to age



Source: Author’s calculation

Therefore, most of the respondents are aged 41 to 60 and older, which is the general demographic picture of villages in the Republic of Serbia.

When it comes to education level, most respondents have completed primary school – 49%, followed by secondary education – 37%, while 14% of respondents have a high school or college degree.

The survey respondents live and work in the following places in the Rasina district: Lomnica, Kupci, Kukljin, Jasika, Gornji Stepoš, Naupare, Trmčare. These rural settlements were chosen for research because of their size, easy access as well as their numerous natural, cultural assets and hospitality of the hosts.

In part of this section a comparison of respondents by gender in terms of attitudes about the development of rural tourism in the Rasina district is presented.

Table 1. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *Domestic tourists are our most frequent visitors*

Statement		N	M	SD	t	p
Domestic tourists are our most frequent visitors.	male	193	3.68	1.30	-.453	.651
	female	95	3.76	1.31		

Note: N - number of respondents, M - arithmetic mean, SD - standard deviation, t - statistics, p - statistical significance

** significance at the level of 0.01.

* significance at the level of 0.05.

Source: Author’s calculation

The result of the t-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between male and female respondents ($t(286) = -.453, p = .651$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Domestic tourists are our most frequent visitors* (Table 1).

Table 2. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *Foreign tourists are our most frequent visitors*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Foreign tourists are our most frequent visitors.	male	193	2.58	1.44	-.052	.959
	female	95	2.59	1.34		

Source: Author's calculation

The result of the t-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between male and female respondents ($t(286) = -.052$, $p = .959$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Foreign tourists are our most frequent visitors* (Table 2).

Table 3. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *Tourists stay on our farm and through us get involved in the life of the family and the whole village, get acquainted with customs and traditions, etc.*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Tourists stay on our farm and through us get involved in the life of the family and the whole village, get acquainted with customs and traditions, etc.	male	193	3.64	1.40	-.427	.670
	female	95	3.72	1.32		

Source: Author's calculation

The result of the t-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of respondents ($t(286) = -.427$, $p = .670$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement. Tourists stay on our farm and through us get involved in family life and the whole village, get acquainted with the customs and traditions, etc. (Table 3).

Table 4. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *Tourists most often visit our farms to get to know or participate in agricultural work, enjoy the pure nature and get acquainted with the ethno content of rural areas*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Tourists most often visit our farms to get to know or participate in agricultural work, enjoy the pure nature and get acquainted with the ethno content of rural areas.	male	193	4.09	1.20	.615	.539
	female	95	4.00	1.23		

Source: Author's calculation

The result of the t-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of respondents ($t(286) = .615$, $p = .539$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Tourists most often visit our farms to get to know or participate in agricultural work, enjoy the pure nature and getting acquainted with the ethno contents of the rural area* (Table 4).

Table 5. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *I believe that within the development of rural tourism, wine tourism in the Rasina district can be significantly improved*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
I believe that within the development of rural tourism, wine tourism in the Rasina district can be significantly improved.	male	193	3.84	1.22	-3.327	.001**
	female	95	4.26	0.90		

Source: Author's calculation

There are statistically significant differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement ($p=001$). Namely, female respondents ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.90$) express a higher degree of agreement with the above statement compared to men ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.22$). Thus, females are significantly more likely than men to believe that wine tourism can be improved within the development of rural tourism (*Table 5*).

Table 6. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve gastronomic tourism in the Rasina district*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve gastronomic tourism in the Rasina district.	male	193	4.41	0.91	2.448	.016*
	female	95	4.06	1.24		

Source: Author's calculation

The results of the t-test show that there are statistically significant differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve gastronomic tourism in Rasina district*. Namely, male respondents ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.91$) express a higher degree of agreement with the stated statement in relation to women ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.24$). Thus, males are significantly more likely than women to believe that gastronomic tourism can be improved within the development of rural tourism (*Table 6*).

Table 7. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *I believe that within the development of rural tourism can be significantly improved event tourism in the Rasina district*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
I believe that the development of rural tourism can be significantly improved event tourism in the Rasina district.	male	193	2.80	1.25	.156	.876
	female	95	2.78	1.20		

Source: Author's calculation

T-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of respondents ($t(286) = .156$, $p = .876$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *I believe that within the development of rural tourism can be significantly improved event tourism in the Rasina district* (*Table 7*).

Table 8. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis for the development of rural tourism*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis for the development of rural tourism.	male	193	3.91	1.50	-3.254	.001**
	female	95	4.43	1.15		

Source: Author's calculation

The results of the t-test for independent samples show that there are statistically significant differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis of rural tourism development* ($t(286) = -3.254$, $p = .001$). Namely, female respondents ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.15$) express a higher degree of agreement with the above statement compared to men ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.50$). Thus, members of the female sex, to a much greater extent than men, believe that agricultural production in their village is the main productive activity that is the basis for the development of rural tourism (Table 8).

Table 9. Comparison of the attitudes of male and female respondents in relation to the statement *The village has a modern tourist infrastructure (info-boards, tourist trails, facilities for food, entertainment, information, culture and education, sports and recreation)*

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Rasina district has adequate tourist infrastructure.	male	193	1.86	1.20	-.301	.764
	female	95	1.91	1.19		

Source: Author's calculation

The result of the t-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of respondents ($t(286) = -.301$, $p = .764$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Rasina district has adequate tourist infrastructure*. (Table 9).

Table 10. Comparison of male and female respondents regarding the statement *The road infrastructure to my village is excellent: the roads are good and signs on them are clear to foreign tourists*.

Statement	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
The road infrastructure to my village is excellent: the roads are good and signs on them are clear to foreign tourists.	male	193	1.59	1.10	-.182	.856
	female	95	1.61	1.10		

Source: Author's calculation

The result of the t-test indicates that no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of respondents ($t(286) = -.182$, $p = .856$) in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *The road infrastructure to my village is excellent: the roads are good and signs on them are clear to foreign tourists* (Table 10).

In part of this section, it is shown a comparison of respondents by age in terms of attitudes about the development of rural tourism in the Rasina district.

Table 11. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *Domestic tourists are our most frequent visitors*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
Domestic tourists are our most frequent visitors.	Between groups	5.504	4	1.376	0.811	.519
	Within groups	479.996	283	1.696		
	Total	485.500	287			

Note: df - degrees of freedom, F - statistician, p - statistical significance

Source: Author's calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Domestic tourists are our most frequent visitors* ($F(4,283) = 0.811$, $p = .519$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (*Table 11*).

Table 12. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *Foreign tourists are our most frequent visitors*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
Foreign tourists are our most frequent visitors.	Between groups	8.321	4	2.080	1.052	.381
	Within groups	559.679	283	1.978		
	Total	568.000	287			

Source: Author's calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Foreign tourists are our most frequent visitors* ($F(4,283) = 1,052$, $p = .381$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (*Table 12*).

Table 13. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *Tourists stay on our farm and through us get involved in the life of the family and the whole village, get acquainted with customs and traditions, etc.*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
Tourists stay on our farm and through us get involved in the life of the family and the whole village, get acquainted with customs and traditions, etc.	Between groups	1.522	4	.381	0.201	.938
	Within groups	536.478	283	1.896		
	Total	538.000	287			

Source: Author's calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Tourists stay on our farm and through us get involved in the life of the family and the whole village, get acquainted with customs and traditions, etc.* ($F(4,283) = 0.201, p = .938$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (*Table 13*).

Table 14. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *Tourists most often visit our farms to get acquainted or participate in agricultural work, enjoy the pure nature and get acquainted with the ethno content of rural areas*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
Tourists most often visit our farms to get acquainted or participate in agricultural work, enjoy the pure nature, and get acquainted with the ethno content of rural areas.	Between groups	4.951	4	1.238	0.846	.497
	Within groups	413.924	283	1.463		
	Total	418.875	287			

Source: Author's calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Tourists most often visit our farms to get to know or participate in agricultural work, enjoy pure nature and get to know the ethno content of rural areas* ($F(4,283) = 0.846, p = .497$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (*Table 14*).

Table 15. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve wine tourism in the Rasina district*

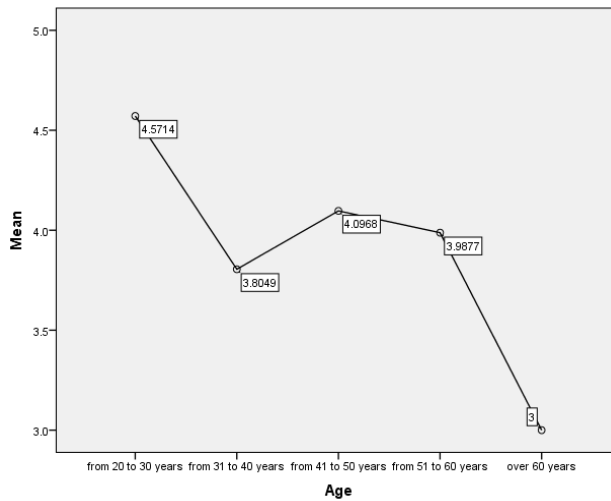
Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve wine tourism in the Rasina district.	Between groups	30.467	4	7.617	6.314	< .001
	Within groups	341.408	283	1.206		
	Total	371.875	287			

Source: Author's calculation

The results of the ANOVA test indicate that there are statistically significant differences between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve wine tourism in Rasina district* - ($F(4,283) = 6.314, p < .001$). A follow-up test for multiple comparisons (Tuckey HSD) found that respondents over 60 years of age differed significantly from those aged 20-30, 41-50 and 51-60 in terms of having a slightly more reserved attitude towards opportunities for improving wine tourism within the development of rural tourism (*Table 15*).

Figure 2 shows the average scores that express the degree of agreement with the statement in relation to age. It can be noticed that respondents aged 20 to 30 have the most positive opinion ($M = 4.57$), followed by 41 to 50 ($M = 4.10$), 51-60 ($M = 3.99$), while the average score of respondents over 60 years of age is 3.00 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Overview of the average score on a five-point scale of statement in relation to age (*I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve wine tourism in the Rasina district*)



Source: Author’s calculation

Table 16. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *I believe that in the development of rural tourism can significantly improve gastronomic tourism in the Rasina district*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve gastronomic tourism in the Rasina district.	Between groups	3.377	4	.844	0.773	.543
	Within groups	308.943	283	1.092		
	Total	312.319	287			

Source: Author’s calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement. *I believe that the development of rural tourism can significantly improve gastronomic tourism in the Rasina district* ($F(4,283) = 0.773, p = .543$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (Table 16).

Table 17. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *I believe that the development of rural tourism can be significantly improved event tourism in the Rasina district*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
I believe that the development of rural tourism can be significantly improved event tourism in the Rasina district.	Between groups	3.189	4	.797	0.520	.721
	Within groups	433.724	283	1.533		
	Total	436.913	287			

Source: Author's calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement. *I believe that in the development of rural tourism can be significantly improved event tourism in the Rasina district* ($F(4,283) = 0.520, p = .721$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (Table 17).

Table 18. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis for the development of rural tourism*

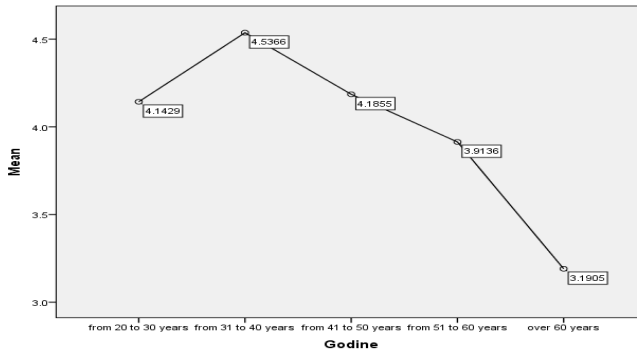
Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis for the development of rural tourism.	Between groups	28.866	4	7.217	3.746	.005
	Within groups	545.134	283	1.926		
	Total	574.000	287			

Source: Author's calculation

The results of the ANOVA test indicate that there are statistically significant differences between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis of rural tourism development* - ($F(4,283) = 3,746, p = .005$). A follow-up test for multiple comparisons (Tuckey HSD) found that respondents over 60 years of age differed significantly from those aged 31-40 and 41-50 in terms of expressing a lower degree of agreement with the statement (Table 18).

Figure 3 shows the average scores that express the degree of agreement with the statement in relation to age. It can be noticed that respondents aged 31 to 40 have the most positive opinion ($M = 4.54$), followed by those aged 41 to 50 ($M = 4.19$), while the average score of respondents over 60 is 3.19 (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Overview of the average score on a five-point scale of agreement in relation to age (*Agricultural production in my village is the main production activity, which is the basis for the development of rural tourism*)



Source: Author’s calculation

Table 19 Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *The village has a modern tourist infrastructure (info-boards, tourist trails, facilities for food, entertainment, information, culture and education, sports and recreation)*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
Rasina district has adequate tourist infrastructure.	Between groups	3.371	4	.843	0.587	.672
	Within groups	406.129	283	1.435		
	Total	409.500	287			

Source: Author’s calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement *Rasina district has adequate tourist infrastructure* ($F(4,283) = 0.587, p = .672$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (*Table 19*).

Table 20. Presentation of the attitudes of respondents of different years in the opinion on the statement *The road infrastructure to my village is excellent: the roads are good and the markings on them are clear to foreign tourists*

Statement		Sum of squares	df	Average square	F	p
The road infrastructure to my village is excellent: the roads are good and the markings on them are clear to foreign tourists.	Between groups	3.688	4	.922	0.763	.550
	Within groups	341.781	283	1.208		
	Total	345.469	287			

Source: Author’s calculation

No statistically significant differences were found between respondents of different ages in terms of the degree of agreement with the statement. *The road infrastructure to my village is excellent: the roads are good, and the signs on them are clear to foreign tourists* ($F(4,283) = 0.763, p = .550$). An analysis of average grades on a five-point scale shows that there is no difference between them (Table 20).

From the conducted research and presented data, it can be concluded that general hypothesis H_0 : *Rural tourism in the Rasina district has huge potential, but is not sufficiently developed* is confirmed. When we look at the obtained results and summarize the answers of the respondents, it can be noticed that all of them, regardless of gender and age, share their views on the development of the areas in which they live.

So, special hypothesis H_1 : *There are no statistically significant differences in attitudes towards the development of rural tourism in the Rasina District in relation to the gender of the respondents* was confirmed, since only three of the ten claims examined showed a statistically significant difference in relation to the gender variable.

Special hypothesis H_2 : *There are no statistically significant differences in attitudes towards the development of rural tourism in the Rasina District in relation to the age of the respondents* was confirmed, since only in two out of ten examined claims, a statistically significant difference was found in relation to the age variable.

Conclusions

Obvious conclusions can be drawn regarding the need to improve the management of rural tourism development and adopt an adequate strategy that will turn theoretical assumptions into reality. The significance of tourism development in contemporary society is not a need, but more a necessity (Pantić & Milojević, 2019). The *Covid-19* virus pandemic, which occurred two years ago, contributed to the closure of borders; however, it had its benefits for rural tourism within the countries (Polukhina et al., 2021). Namely, people turn to accessible locations and discover the beauties of their country, get to know customs that they did not know about until then, and participate in various events. The current subsidy from the state related to vouchers in the amount of RSD 5,000, in addition, helps to increase the number of visits by domestic tourists. Also, gastronomic specialties, brandy, and wines from the Rasina district have attracted many tourists, both domestic and foreign. They all enjoy watching the process from harvesting to preparing food and drinks and especially enjoy trying out the end products. However, the existing problems related to road infrastructure, poor signalization, lack of water and electricity in some villages, can have a very negative impact on the tourist perception of rural areas in the Rasina district. In this regard, it is necessary to make additional efforts so that the villagers live in better conditions, and thus be able to provide more to the development of rural tourism.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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