

RURAL TOURISM – SERBIA'S MISSED CHANCE

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Summary

Rural tourism is both old and new phenomenon. The interest for recreation in the countryside began to grow as early as XIX century, as a reaction to the pressure of growing urbanization and industrialization.

Serbia has great potentials for development of rural tourism. Natural beauty in combination with culture, tradition, festivals, gastronomic specialties and music, might become recognizable tourist brand, which could contribute to the significant monetary influx and improve the overall image of the country.

However, current level of Serbia's competitiveness in the area of rural tourism is not particularly high, regardless of the fact that all of the natural, cultural and social prerequisites for its development already exist (natural potentials, significant farming land, great number of agriculturally active population, traditional approach to agriculture, lack of ground pollution as well as the possibility of producing „healthy food“, good potential for development of complementary activities such as hiking, recreation, hunting, fishing, riding and participating in everyday activities of the country folk, traditional local gastronomical specialties etc.).

The goal of this paper is to show the resources of Serbia in the area of rural tourism as well as the possible development potentials of this form of tourism.

Key words: *Rural tourism, village tourism, agrotourism, sustainable development, Serbia*

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Introduction

The year 2011 marked 60 years since the first village family homestead for tourism appeared. Long ago in the year 1951, senator of a small archetypical French village Chandal a la Javie in Provence, Emile Aubert, started the idea of providing tourist services on a village homestead. The prime goal was preservation and development of rural environment, opening up new business perspectives by providing tourism services, new impulse to revivification of agriculture and based on that prevention of population migration out of the rural and into urban areas. An old long-abandoned traditionally built stable was transformed into a tourist object, i.e. village house for providing tourist services and it was named „cottage“ (fr. *gites*). It was then and there that the successful realization of this pilot project started the development of village tourism in the form that we know today⁴.

Nowadays, with all the stress, haste, lack of personal time and lack of high-quality activities, rural tourism is an excellent opportunity to escape from such stressful everyday life by giving the possibility of spending a pleasant holiday that evokes nostalgia for the times of our ancestors. Today, rural tourism is an important component of integral and sustainable development of villages, as well as an important factor in encouraging the development of local agricultural and non-agricultural activities in the country, and is also a special stimulus to employment. Social and economic forces that act on a global level are determined not only by appearance, but also by forms of rural landscapes, as well as ways of its valorization and utilization (Butler, Hall, Jenkins, 1998). In many countries of the European Union, rural tourism is included in strategies for the development of regions and rural areas, which helps keeping the population in place, creating new jobs and contributing to the socio-economic progress of the underdeveloped areas (Muhi, 2013).

Rural tourism provides development opportunities for small businesses which would otherwise be unprofitable in rural communities with few inhabitants. Two groups of entrepreneurs have a special benefit from tourism development, primarily those who are directly involved in tourism (eg. attractions, accommodation facilities such as houses for rent, motels and restaurants), as well as those who benefit indirectly from development of tourism (eg. gas stations, retail shops, etc.). In addition, rural tourism is suited to existing rural businesses, such as rural households, helping them to create a secondary income (Wilson et al, 2001).

A research of British magazine „Country Living“ from 2004 shows us just how much are rural way of life and activities carried out in the countryside (primarily through agriculture) really valuable and necessary, with very interesting results. Of the 1,000 respondents, 41% said that moving to the countryside brought excitement into their lives, while 39% noted that their life has improved or that they expect it to happen. Most respondents believe that life in the countryside is better for the health, there is less crime and they expect to live longer. Among those who have moved to the country, 44%

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said they spend more time with their partner, 38% have more mutual friends, 27% less frequently quarrel, and the overall level of satisfaction is higher among people who have moved from urban to rural area, than those who did not move.

Modern way of human living is characterized by a fast pace, stress, alienation, lack of time for themselves and their families, unhealthy and fast food, specific diseases and unproductiveness at work. The opposite way of life presumes activity over long walks and recreation, sounds from nature for relaxation, enjoying food and more proper nutrition with verified groceries. This significantly contributes to prevention of some diseases, improving the quality of life, higher productivity, getting more time for family, rapprochement with nature, the awakening of positive nostalgia etc. Precisely because of this, the motives for coming to the village such as: peace, clean environment, interaction with new people (local villagers), healthy food, slow food (slow eating, enjoying the food), slower pace of life and leisure, are responsible for the development of and survival of rural tourism as a tourism oriented towards an individual customer and his needs.

„The attractiveness of rural areas for tourism and relaxation can be best explained by the idea of the rural, which is closely associated with the traditional and romantic idea of the „good old days”, innocent and simple way of life, untouched nature and a perfectly fit man in his natural environment. So, desirability and the need to return to the roots and a simple lifestyle without complex organization, stress and the urban environment leads to increasing interest for rural areas” (Kastenholz et al., 1999).

Interest in rural tourism is constantly increasing, given the existence of still attractive and „untouched” rural areas with strictly defined way of life, culture and traditions, great need to preserve these areas, giving the population income opportunities through tourism services and conservation of native services and products, creating a bid for a unique holiday. The relative technological stagnation of our agricultural production (extensive mode of production, low use of mineral fertilizers, reduced consumption of pesticides, etc.) could be fitted into a world megatrend (production and consumption of healthy organic food) and could overnight turn into a significant competitive advantage and form of Serbian tourism product differentiation (Đenadić, 2012).

Rural areas cover about 80% of the total territory of the European Union with about 25% of the total population (Veer, Tuunter, 2005). Rural tourism is gaining importance in the development plans of Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, Austria and many other countries' tourism. Studies done in this area show an evident increase of all parameters of village tourism (increased offer, increased overnight stays, higher turnover, etc.). There are other positive examples that rural tourism brings: better employment for women, youth stays in the countryside, the use of previously unused capacities, new jobs, better treatment of the local population towards the environment and the like.

Rural, village, agro-tourism - definition of concepts

Rural tourism, village tourism, agrotourism, tourist countryside family household - those are all terms which the household owners who are engaged or intend to engage in tourist

services on their farms inevitably encounter, almost on a daily basis. Frequent use of the above terms often leads to doubts among the household owners, entrepreneurs in village tourism, which is the correct term? One can often hear questions: What am I engaged in: agrotourism, village tourism, rural tourism or something else? If I'm not using the right term, which one is correct? Authors tried to give a simple definition of each of these terms used by the public, and to make an understandable classification of terms, according to which would be possible to clearly distinguish which forms of tourism are in question at first glance, what each individual term means and which term should be used. (Ivanović, Pantić, 2008).

Although the definition of rural tourism is subject of much debate in the literature, a strong consensus has not been reached (Pearce, 1989; Bramwell, 1994; Seaton et al., 1994). Standard definitions of the terms rural, agro and village tourism, which would be accepted in all areas that develop this type of tourism services, do not exist, although they have been discussed since the First World Forum on Rural Tourism held in 2000 in Perugia, where one of the conclusions was the need to develop a comprehensive definition acceptable to all institutions and entities that develop rural tourism. In this respect, harmonizing the views of many authors, rural tourism destinations can be defined as wider areas with natural and wooded environment where there are specific natural, economic and socio-cultural features, such as traditions, local cooperation, trust and good mutual relations and as such create a special tourism products that are primarily based on the economics of small-scale and friendly to the environment, „colored” by ethnic elements, in one word „sustainable” (Pearce, 1989; Bramwell, 1994; Seaton et al., 1994).

However, opinions of experts on the topic of defining the tourism activities in the rural areas is slowly approaching the standpoints in the way of profiling the three basic concepts/terms used in this segment: rural tourism, village tourism, countryside household or farm tourism (tourist country family household), with the following meanings: Rural tourism is the broadest term that encompasses the overall tourist services/activities/aspects of tourism within rural areas, including, e.g. hunting, fishing, tourism in nature parks, ecotourism, health, cultural, village, ethno tourism. Rural tourism is not necessarily additional activity on the family farm which generates additional income, but it can also be a professional activity (e.g. a small family hotel, a center of horsemanship). Furthermore, the very term of a rural area is generally not strictly defined, but includes areas in which prevail: the natural environment, rural environment, small towns and villages, isolated farms with agriculture and forestry as main activities.

Village tourism is a narrower concept of rural tourism, and the broader concept of agrotourism on the farm (countryside family household) and it is connected to the ambience of the village and its immediate surroundings, as well as all its activities (agriculture, events, gastronomy, ethnology, folklore and other economic activities). Rural tourism means and includes a range of activities, services and additional facilities organized by rural population on family farms and ranches in order to attract tourists and create additional income, while respecting the principles of sustainable development and conservation of natural resources (Štetić, 2007).

Rural tourism is usually the second or third vacation during the year (after the summer and winter holidays). The main seasons are spring and autumn, while significant turnover is registered also in summer. The primary motives for tourists to come to the countryside are the nature and cultural heritage, as well as gastronomy, activities, special interests.

Finally, agrotourism or tourism on a countryside household (farm) only refers to a form of tourist services that are an additional activity on the farm with agriculture as their primary activity, which includes offering products produced on the farm. Agrotourism involves staying in the village for education, or actively participating in all agricultural work (e.g. the cultivation of vines, preparing food for winter, storing cured meats).

Ecotourism represents a stay in intact and maintained nature. Ecotourists are environmentally conscious travelers who exclusively choose areas of outstanding natural beauty for their stay, who do not stay in big, fancy and expensive hotels, but rather in the small rural tourist households (whose business activities do not inhibit the natural environment in which they are located). Ecotourism is a type of tourism which records higher annual growth rate than all other forms of tourism (30% annually).

Rural Tourism of Serbia

Rural tourism is a real trump of revitalization for many sleepy, if not completely disappeared, smaller and larger rural spatial entities. Tourism development in these areas can stop the emigration of young people, because the development of tourism today means creating basic conditions for a general, much higher mutual comfort of rural settlements. In such circumstances, young people can find not only economical, but also social and cultural motives to continue living in family homes in areas where the general quality of life really is approaching the level which is nowadays deemed necessary worldwide (Vratuša, Anastasijević, 2002).

Serbia is a land of rural character and is one of the most agrarian countries in Europe. Rural development, as one of the areas of regional policy, is a key instrument for the restructuring of the agricultural sector and should have the task to focus and strategically use the potential of touristically attractive villages. Local specificity and the availability of resources make it difficult to create a universal model for the development of rural tourism products and destinations (Mathieson, Wall, 1982).

Considering the expressed economic and other functions of tourism, as well as diverse and highly valuable potentials, the opportunity and appropriate importance to the development of this sector are given by the spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia and its economic policy. In addition, the Tourism Development Strategy in Serbia established a selective approach, where rural tourism is treated as a priority under those forms of tourism that are tied to special interests.

The rich natural, cultural and historical diversity of the Republic of Serbia creates exceptional conditions for the development of rural tourism, as well as the placement of the wide offer for different segments of demand in the tourist market. Rural tourism has a

large potential, because this segment of offer provides significant opportunities. The rural area, which makes up more than 85% of the territory of the Republic of Serbia, has about 43% of the population in about 42% of households that are directly or indirectly related to agriculture. Considering the natural and cultural diversity of the region, rich resource base of tourist attractions, preserved surroundings and thousands of agricultural households, the Republic of Serbia has all the conditions for the development of rural, and other special forms of tourism related to the rural area. Rural tourism, as well as other forms of rural tourism significantly enrich the tourist offer and provide new quality and impetus to the development of tourism in Serbia (Đorđević-Milošević, Milovanović, 2012).

Since ancient times Serbia has been known as an agricultural country. Visitors have an opportunity for a perfect break from urban life with the fresh air, the smell of hay, flowers, pine and freshly trimmed lawns, clean drinking water and rivers. A significant number of activities are at their disposal during the stay: walking through nature, fishing, gathering plants and berries, but the thing which guests will never forget is hospitality and delicious home-cooked food.

The village population still conscientiously preserves the traditional way of life, devotedly working in the fields and taking care of domestic animals. During the harvest in the summer and autumn months, every village becomes a small factory where food for winter is prepared, as are fruit brandies and juices in keeping with century old recipes. The most important products include raspberries, plums from which world-famous „šljivovica” plum brandy is made, grapes and local wines, as well as other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. During the stay tourists should not bypass „kajmak” homemade sour cream, a product unique in the world. The relative lack of modern technologies in our agricultural production (extensive mode of production, poor use of mineral fertilizers, reduced consumption of plant protection products, etc.) can fit into the global megatrend (production and consumption of healthy organic food) and could be turned into a significant competitive advantage and form of Serbian tourism product differentiation (Đenadić, 2012).

While visiting villages and spending delightful times, a person can evoke memories of own childhood. Short stays in the countryside, mostly on weekends with family and children, are recommended. It is necessary to grant guests a possibility of purchase of healthy, organic food at prices much lower than in urban markets. Often new friends are made, children enjoy the charms of carefree running about through meadows and pastures, where, if nothing else, they can discover that cows are not purple.

Serbian villages have exceptionally favorable natural and cultural prerequisites for development of village tourism. Vacation, recreation, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, picking herbs, picnics and other activities, represent a real opportunity to enjoy the beauty of untouched nature. Tourists will be welcomed by hospitable local population with a rich selection of local food and preserved tradition of rural households.

Village tourism in Serbia has definitely progressed as is evidenced by its contemporary offer: farmhouse with a tennis clay or tartan court, with a swimming pool in the

shade, or one that overlooks the field covered with milfoil, with Finnish sauna or Turkish bath, even with massage parlors! Due to the fact that village tourism began a presentation on the Internet, the profile of tourists has changed and now grandmothers with grandchildren are seldom seen as guests. Most of the guests are young couples, businessmen, people who have traveled, who know what they want and how to enjoy it.

Most of the tourists in the village tourism are families with children and couples. By quantity, they are being followed by groups of friends, students, young people, who are visiting villages looking for a different kind of fun. On the 4th place are businessmen, who like to roll up their sleeves, to watch the folklore games, eat well and to pay generously. On the last place are retirees, which is a total turnaround regarding the last decade.

The swimming pool is not always being looked for, but guests can have a swim in twenty or so households: Gostoljublje (Mionica, Kosjerić), The Milica Mansion (Trudelj, Gornji Milanovac), Obradovići (Katići, Ivanjica), Lepenica (Ključ, Mionica) etc. Kačerac has a tennis court in the village Brančić, near Ljig. Sauna and jacuzzi have become a standard offer in households in Gornji Milanovac, Kosjerić, Knić and Užice. Mansion Etna, in the Ugrinovci village, near Gornji Milanovac, offers a true wellness spa, with Turkish bath, massage parlor and a Salt Room. There are thoughts that it is not village tourism anymore, but everything located in a village represents village tourism. Although, guests are not thinking about the village tourism as a sleeping in a hay bed and waking up in a field toilet. There are extremely luxurious objects, where one night costs up to 160€. If two people are ready to travel to Zdravkovac village, to pay 300€ for a weekend and to go home happy, isn't that a high-point of village tourism? (Krsmanović, 2013).

Rural tourism is a key factor in the activation and sustainable development of rural areas, which helps to preserve the local identity, traditions and customs, strengthens indigenous, traditional and ecological production of healthy food. From the very beginnings of development of village tourism in Serbia, everyone who wanted to start providing tourist services in their households, were faced with the lack of service and detailed information and knowledge about village and rural tourism, as more comprehensive concept. Such information (regarding commitments, promotion, marketing and many other topics) are needed primarily for those who only intend to engage in village tourism.

Analysis of the state of rural tourism in Serbia

For the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of rural tourism of the Republic of Serbia, as well as opportunities and threats in the environment, the SWOT analysis is used (Table 1). Based on this analysis, it is noticed that the weakness of rural areas are more numerous and stronger in effect in comparison to the comparative advantages and that in the coming period, environmental factors will pose at the same time significant opportunities, but also a threat to the sustainable development of rural tourism in Serbia. This primarily refers to the forthcoming European integrations, the necessary level of quality of tourism product, trade balance in agricultural products, exposure to competition in this area, and the like.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the rural tourism of the Republic of Serbia

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<i>Geographic and tourist location</i> <i>Preserved natural resources and rural landscapes</i> <i>Biodiversity</i> <i>Geothermal springs, lakes, rivers, forests</i> <i>The rich cultural and historical heritage</i> <i>Traditional rural hospitality</i>	<i>Lack of financial resources for investments</i> <i>Underdeveloped infrastructure</i> <i>Migration of populations from rural areas</i> <i>Unfavorable educational and age structure</i> <i>The isolation and rural poverty</i> <i>Undeveloped and undiversified rural economy</i> <i>Inadequate production in terms of quality and volume</i> <i>Inadequate waste treatment</i> <i>Insufficient economic integration</i>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<i>Sustainable use of natural resources</i> <i>Economic diversification</i> <i>Development of small and medium-sized enterprises</i> <i>Horizontal and vertical integration in tourism</i> <i>The production and use of renewable energy</i> <i>Organic and traditionally prepared food</i> <i>Autochthonous products with protected origin</i> <i>EU pre-accession funds</i> <i>Cross-border cooperation projects</i>	<i>Competition in the domestic and international markets</i> <i>Low purchasing power of the local population</i> <i>Changes in trends and consumer demand</i> <i>Socio-economic and political instability</i> <i>Climate changes</i> <i>Inadequate use of natural resources</i> <i>International standards of service quality</i> <i>Lack of skilled labor</i> <i>Insufficient availability of financial resources</i>

Source: The authors, based on MPŠV, 201, 105-107

In order to utilize the full potential of rural tourism and to create a sustainable, competitive tourist product of rural tourism, it is necessary to conduct market survey, as well as survey of needs, motives and preferences of consumers (tourists). On the basis of these information and taking into account available resources, rural tourism can be developed appropriately.

Identifying different categories of potential visitors (eg. families, the elderly, youth, active tourists, tourists with special interests, etc.) plays a key role in the formation of an adequate offer. Each of these categories of visitors have different preferences, interests and requirements, so it is necessary to form different offers and services for each of these segments in rural tourism (Muhi, 2010).

According to these ascertainment in the following text are stated the results of a survey in which we focused on younger population, the college students. The goal was to

examine their views on rural tourism in Serbia. Even though the results may not represent the entirety of the Republic of Serbia (relatively small number of participants and only two locations), the survey still provides some qualitative conclusions. The aim of this survey research was to show whether and to what extent respondents are satisfied and interested in rural tourism, as a relatively new trend in tourism, which is booming in the world. The data was gathered at the Educons University in Sremska Kamenica and at Higher Professional School of Agricultural Studies in Šabac. The sample consists of 46 respondents.

The research used the five-point scalar method (Likert type). Willingness to answer questions was mandatory. All the answers were valid. The participation in the survey was optional. The validity of this constructed questionnaire provided a precise selection of statements that directly relate to the subject of research.

Respondents were asked to evaluate stated claims on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 - bad, 5 - excellent, resp. 1 - disagree, 5 - I agree completely).

Table 2. Survey questions

Claims	Marks (from 1 to 5, 1 - bad, 5 - excellent, resp. 1 - disagree, 5 - I agree completely)
Quality promotion of rural tourism in Serbia	1 2 3 4 5
With what resources Serbia has in the sphere of rural tourism	1 2 3 4 5
The content and the offer of rural tourism in Serbia is interesting to the youth	1 2 3 4 5
The content and the offer of rural tourism in Serbia is interesting to foreign guests	1 2 3 4 5
Promotion of rural tourism in Serbia	1 2 3 4 5
Potential tourists are familiar with the offer of rural tourism	1 2 3 4 5
State investment in the development of rural tourism	1 2 3 4 5
Cooperation among stakeholders (local people, travel agencies, tourist organizations, etc.) in the field of rural tourism	1 2 3 4 5

Source: The authors

The results (Table 3) were somewhat expected. Respondents absolutely agree that Serbia has excellent resources in the sphere of rural tourism, but the quality of the

offer is not satisfactory (score 3,6). The content and the offer of rural tourism in Serbia is only partially interesting to young people (score 3,4), so in this segment there is still a lot of work to be done in order to make the contents attractive to the younger population. A similar evaluation is shown for the content and promotion of rural tourism of Serbia to foreign guests (score 3,2), clearly foreign guests are more demanding and choosy, seeking adequate value for money. From this point of view hosts have to make additional effort (among other things to learn foreign languages, especially English, German, etc.). As far as the promotion of rural tourism in Serbia goes, the respondents stated that it is not sufficient in both volume and quality (score 2,8), accordingly potential tourists are not properly familiarized with the offer of rural tourism in Serbia. Also, it should be worked on marketing (print and broadcast media, Internet marketing, participation in trade fairs, etc.). According to the respondents opinions, state investment in the development of rural tourism is also not adequate (score 2,6), as well as cooperation among stakeholders (local people, tourist agencies, tourist organizations, etc.) in the field of rural tourism (score 2,8).

Table 3. Survey results

Claims	Average marks
Quality promotion of rural tourism in Serbia	3,6
With what resources Serbia has in the sphere of rural tourism	4,2
The content and the offer of rural tourism in Serbia is interesting to the youth	3,4
The content and the offer of rural tourism in Serbia is interesting to foreign guests	3,2
Promotion of rural tourism in Serbia	2,8
Potential tourists are familiar with the offer of rural tourism	3,0
State investment in the development of rural tourism	2,6
Cooperation among stakeholders (local people, travel agencies, tourist organizations, etc.) in the field of rural tourism	2,8

Source: The authors

Challenges and possible directions for the development of rural tourism in Serbia

The most common result of the exclusive or predominant reliance of rural development of a country on agriculture (though it is the most important and most frequent activity of the rural economy) is a phenomenon of rural poverty and unemployment. The experience of developed countries in solving economic and demographic problems of rural areas emphasizes both non-agricultural aspects of sustainable rural development: the manufacturing industry, indigenous crafts, trade of their own products and in particular, rural tourism.

The level of development of rural tourism of a country certainly depends on the overall socio-economic development. Therefore, the total revenue realized by holders of rural tourism in our country is small and inadequate, but also as such from the standpoint of individual rural households is not irrelevant. A significant effect of the development of rural tourism can be a significant involvement of women workforce in this type of activity.

With the advent of urbanization and industrialization, and thereby exhausting work, noise, different kinds of pollution, more and more tourists yearn for areas of preserved nature, clean air and healthy food. An ideal refuge for these tourists are precisely rural, village areas and farms - an oasis of peace, which were previously symbols of wealth, fertility and prestige.

Serbia has very favorable prerequisites for the development of tourism in the countryside. First of all, those are particularly favorable conditions of preserved nature, with a mild climate, clean air, still unpolluted rivers and lakes, rich flora and fauna. Residing in nature gives tourists the possibility for walks, recreation, playing sports, hunting and fishing, horseback riding, hiking, picking forest fruits and medicinal herbs and other recreational and leisure activities in the countryside. Tourists who show interest in it may be included in the agricultural works. According to the opinion Taleb Rifai, Deputy Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization, the Serbian village is a tourism potential which in this form is not registered anywhere in the world (Hotel professional, 2008).

The development of tourism in Serbian villages does not have a long tradition, because the organized travel of tourists in this region began to take place by the end of the '70s. The recent development of village tourism offer of Serbia was marked by uncoordinated and unsynchronized development, without integration with other entities. This development has formed an incomplete and insufficiently differentiated offer of rural tourism in the country (Hrabovski-Tomić, 2008).

One of the most important tasks in the development of rural tourism is to educate village hosts for engaging in this activity. Firstly it is necessary, through professional reevaluating of domestic and foreign positive experience in tourism in the countryside, to demonstrate village hosts the economic justification for practicing this activity. In addition to that, the use of energetic marketing, propaganda and information can set a goal to familiarize the general population of our country, as well as domestic and foreign tourists, with exceptional beauty and possibilities offered by rural tourism.

A development strategy for rural tourism and its implementation must necessarily be carried out through cooperation not only at the local level but also through regional cooperation and integration in the wider international programs. Integration with national and international associations, whose activities are related not only to the development of rural tourism but also for the integral and sustainable development altogether, in addition to the exchange of information, experiences and adoption of methodologies, contributes to more efficient marketing. In order for rural tourism to obtain a significant promotion in the region, a professional marketing approach should be implemented, which could be undertaken by local governments, tourism organizations, NGOs, private sector, etc.

When looking at the most important elements of rural tourism in our country, the following observations can be noted:

- Insufficient use of accommodation facilities, which are already modest in capacity.
- The lack of suites and other accommodation facilities of higher level, resulting in lower prices and total revenue.
- A significant number of rural households (nearly 40%) do not offer food, and therefore does not make any income on that basis.
- Inadequate and underdeveloped promotional and advertising mix, and inadequate sales channels, which are primarily reflected in the limited use of the Internet as a global network, as well as insufficient participation in tourist traffic of the local tourism organizations.
- Low average cost of accommodation and food, which, with a small volume of services results in low total income (the average price of bed and breakfast is about 10 euros, half board 14 euros, and full board is 16 euros).
- Poor offer of additional services in rural households (sports and recreation, trade, transport, handcrafts and the like).
- Insufficient investment in accommodation capacities, which is a sign that there is no need for their expansion.

Conclusion

The main strategic goals of the Serbian tourism in rural areas should be: competitiveness in international market, balanced regional development, self-employment and motivating young people to stay in the countryside, permanent protection, implementing and maintaining high environmental standards for the sake of long-term sustainable valorization of tourism potential of rural areas, developing an overall offer for a tourist destination, raising the quality of accommodation for hospitality and tourism services, encouraging the production of organic food and local products as well as their placement through tourism, educating the employees in rural tourism and increasing the share of rural tourism in the overall tourist traffic.

Looking at the achieved level of development of Serbia in the field of rural tourism, we can conclude that it is unsatisfactory. At the same time it is an indisputable fact that all natural, cultural and social preconditions exist for its development (developed biodiversity, noticeable agricultural resources, a large percentage of active agricultural population, traditional, often extensive ways of farming, limited use of chemicals in conventional production and on that basis the possibility of diverting the production of agricultural products in the direction of organic production, significant preconditions for the conducting the recreational activities such as hiking, adrenaline sports, hunting and fishing, horse riding schools, taking part in agricultural activities within the rural households, as well as the existence of numerous culinary events and the like).

Hard work and effort are necessary to help developing rural tourism in Serbia by education, and to encourage all of those who intend to run tourist services on their homesteads. It is also necessary to facilitate orientation in the business to those who are already operating as rural family households in tourism (involved in agrotourism). It is necessary to further motivate conservation of: ambient architecture, village houses, local specificities, traditions and customs, interesting old arts and crafts, biodiversity, agricultural production on small areas, original products. To allow preserving the vitality of the village and the attractiveness of the village way of life, through tourism services, as a motivator of development of rural areas. It is necessary to do all this in such way as it was done many years ago in France and other most developed tourist destinations in the world today.

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RURALNI TURIZAM - PROPUŠTENA ŠANSNA SRBIJE

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Rezime

Ruralni turizam je u isto vreme i stara i nova pojava. Interesovanje za rekreaciju u seoskim predelima počelo je da raste već u XIX veku, kao reakcija na pritisak rastuće urbanizacije i industrijalizacije. Srbija ima velike potencijale za razvoj ruralnog turizma. Prirodne lepote u kombinaciji sa kulturom, tradicijom, festivalima, gastronomskim specijalitetima i muzikom, mogu postati prepoznatljiv turistički brend, koji bi doprineo značajnom deviznom prihodu i popravio imidž zemlje.

Međutim, trenutno dostignuti nivo konkurentnosti Srbije u sferi ruralnog turizma nije naročito dobar, nezavisno od činjenice da za njegov razvoj postoje svi prirodni, kulturni i socijalni preduslovi (prirodni potencijali, značajno poljoprivredno zemljište, značajan broj poljoprivredno aktivnog stanovništva, tradicionalni pristup poljoprivredi, nezagađenost tla hemijskim supstancama i mogućnost proizvodnje „zdrave hrane“, dobar potencijal za razvoj komplementarnih aktivnosti kao što su šetnje, rekreacija, lov, ribolov, jahanje, učestvovanje u svakodnevnim poslovima seoskih domaćinstava, tradicionalni lokalni gastronomski specijaliteti i sl.).

U ovom radu želimo da prikazemo resurse u Srbiji u sferi ruralnog turizma kao i moguće pravce razvoja ovog oblika turizma.

Ključne reči: *ruralni turizam, seoski turizam, agroturizam, održivi razvoj, Srbija*

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