

SUVA PLANINA AS DEVELOPMENT AREA OF RURAL TOURISM*Novica Randelović¹, Vidoje Stefanović², Nedžad Azemović³***Summary**

In this paper, an attempt was made to emphasize the importance of the phenomenon of rural tourism once again providing the example of the Suva Planina (The Suva Mountain) since rural tourism is increasingly attracting the attention of potential tourists because they see in it the compensation of what they lose in big agglomerations. The Suva Planina has many attributes to develop this type of tourism and thus to enrich the tourist offer of city of Niš and its environment. The aim is to prove that the Suva Planina mountain area may be an important factor in the development of rural tourism. In proving the hypothesis that the initial development of rural tourism should be accelerated as soon as possible, we used inductive-deductive method and the method of comparison and description. Measures are proposed in order to achieve faster development of rural tourism in this region.

Key words: *rural tourism, economic valorization, development, Suva planina.*

JEL: *R00, Q01*

Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to consider the possibility of Suva Mountain in the development of rural tourism in this region, since there exists certain assumptions. In addition, the authors started from the hypothesis that rural tourism in this region is just beginning to develop, but to be expected in the future, its rapid development, which will launch this destination high on the tourist map of Serbia. In their paper the authors have used the inductive-deductive method, and methods of analysis, comparison and description.

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Rural tourism is one of the motivational forms of tourist circulation and represents tourist business in rural areas. The village is anthropogenic tourist motif, mainly ambiance with emphasized recreational and curiosity attributes. Recreational attribute is primarily expressed by the very atmosphere, because the village is characterized by preserved nature, the absence of pollution and large green areas. Beside recreational attribute of tourist attraction derives from the possibility of including tourist in some rural activities such as: livestock pasture management, harvesting fruit, forestation etc. Tourist attraction of the village to a large extent depends on the attractiveness of other motives (which is less attractive other motives, to the attractiveness of the village as a higher motive, and vice versa), (Roberts, 2001, p. 47).

Rural tourism typically represents the extra vacation and usually lasts between three and maximum of 10 days. It has a seasonal character, with the peak season in spring (March - May) and autumn (September - October). Tourist who decide for this type of tourism, are generally highly educated, aged 40 to 50 years old and live in urban areas.

Main goal of paper is to introspect possibilities of Suva Mountain in development of rural tourism, as for that there are certain assumptions.

World and Serbia - in the same direction, the divergence between

Thirty years ago, rural tourism was the only additional activity within developed tourism. However, nowadays this kind of tourism has a more significant role in its development. The rate of growth of tourist demand in rural areas, in the last 20 years, is deployed by region as follows: Europe 52%, Africa 8.1%, 4.1% Middle East, South Asia 9.4%, South East Asia and Pacific 10.8%, 5.4% North America and other parts of the world 4.3%. Study of shorter trips of the European population in the mid-nineties, came to conclusion that 19% of tourist used the circular tours, 10% travelled to the mountains outside the skiing season, and 9% travelled for leisure and recreation in rural areas. All these point to the exceptional direction of European population towards these destinations (Stefanović, 2012, p. 48). The market trends in world are going in benefits of village tourism that affirms World Tourist Organization (WTO).

Republic of Serbia has outstanding possibilities for development of rural tourism. Those possibilities come out of preserved and unpolluted nature, clean and unpolluted air and unspoiled rivers, with rich flora and fauna, and preserved traditional way of life. Those benefits are particularly interesting in the hilly and mountainous areas, which give tourists open possibilities for practicing many activities like: cycling, hiking, mountain climbing, organized field trips, etc. There is also a possibility of engaging of tourists in agricultural works (farming, fruit harvesting, livestock pasture) if the tourists show interest for those activities (Jovičić, 2002, p. 145).

In order to provide better results and to develop in appropriate ways in the rural tourism, a strategy of its development should be made. The key questions and principles of strategic development of rural tourism can be divided into three major categories:

- ✓ Social aspects, which include incitement of contacts between rural and city populations well as motivation of rural population.
- ✓ Environmental aspects, which include the deepening of awareness on the biological, spiritual and physical values of nature and necessity of preserving the rural environment.
- ✓ Economical aspects include the possibilities to realize additional revenues for local and regional economic development, and reversing the process of depopulation and the revival of abandoned rural communities.

The strategy for rural tourism should include long-term, medium-and short-term goals in developing of this type of tourism. Long term goals include the development of the international acceptance of the Charter for rural tourism, then establishing the basic guidelines for future development, identifying potential users and potential tourist region, initiating the necessary research, to identify areas suitable for rural tourism development, etc. (*Stanković, 2000, p. 46*). Medium-term objectives refer to identifying the special rules for landscaping, identification of possible adverse effects of tourism, in order to stop them, urban, architectural and economic integration of tourism, land use, etc. Short-term development goals refer to the organization of animation in rural tourist areas, encouraging creative initiatives by local people, presentation and sale of local handicraft and agricultural products, etc (*Štetić, 2003, p. 45*).

Prospects of development of rural tourism

In addition to categorization and standardization of services, development of rural tourism includes investments in infrastructure (roads, telecommunication), and the preservation of the village from attacks of civilization. It is important to educate rural households and hosts who wish to engage in these activities (*Gajić, 2010*). In this regard it is important to engage local tourism and non-governmental organizations, and all other interested parties. It is necessary to organize lectures, collect literature through which the village hosts primarily to indicate the economic viability of rural tourism. And then it is necessary to familiarize them with all standards and other requirements necessary to create quality tourism (*Stanković, Ćirković, 2003, p. 67*).

In order the rural areas could be involved in tourism is not only necessary the equipment and facilities, but also because people prepared for the reception of guests. Local people must have the desire, ability and opportunity to provide service and to meet the expectations of tourists. In addition to courtesy and quality of services, local people must know the needs of tourists, in order to meet tourists adequately. That is why there is need for education of rural people for development of tourism. The main

areas to be studied are: the nature and the environment, sustainable development and rural tourism, psychology and sociology of human behaviour, quality of service, food, customs and culture, etc (Page, 1997, p. 34).

When a certain level of development is reached, it is necessary to make efforts to organize additional activities for attracting tourists, such as organized trips, exhibitions, variety shows, events, etc. It is also necessary that the rural tourism product should have adequate sales channels. Actually unorganized, uncontrolled development should be overcome and an organized sale should be provided, which will greatly contribute to plants matching supply and demand. In global terms, tourism demand is now more sophisticated, more flexible and selective in relation to different elements of tourism supply (quality, price, etc.), (Čomić, 2003, p. 78). Therefore, striving to offer become more personalized should contribute to the further development of rural tourism.

Development of rural tourism in Serbia doesn't have a long tradition and it has not reached its potential. One of the main reasons for this situation is that he has never been accompanied by adequate stimulus. Therefore it is necessary to significantly engage the government and other relevant entities in order to apply three necessary measures which can be classified into four categories:

1. Economical (giving financial support to rural households)
2. Infrastructural (building roads, infrastructure of postal network, electrical and communal network)
3. Organizational (activation of local and republic authorities)
4. Educational (education and informing of local residents)

To achieve this it is necessary to engage not only the rural population, but also other sectors of the economy - transport, construction industry, food industry etc. Particularly in this regard a significant share of agriculture should be included. In this case, tourism and agriculture are closely linked, a common basis for the village. Opportunities for development are high due to the fact that today there is an increasingly popular trend of environmental protection and healthy nutrition. All in all, with planned and meaningful activities, rural tourism in conjunction with other economic activities could bring the country significant economic benefits. Even according to some data, Serbia is ranked among the 20 most attractive destinations in the world (Čomić, 2001, p. 66).

How does it look like at the Suva Mountain

The development of rural tourism in the area of Suva Mountain deals with “Tourist Organization of Niš”. This Tourism Organization was established in 1995. as a service, whose main activity is production of the development and promotion of tourism in the area of Niš and Niška Banja. These activities include the organization of information and propaganda activities, and promotion of tourist offer of Niš and Niška Banja at fairs and markets at home and abroad. As such, this organization mediates the accommodation of tourists in rural households. In addition to these organizations, the development and promotion of rural tourism is concerned and the Tourist Organization Gadžin Han, which operates in the S. O. Gadžin Han, and organization of the same or similar type of Bela Palanka and Babušnica (Petrović, 1998, p. 44).

Facts of rural tourism at the Suva Mountain

Rural Tourism Suva Mountain is at a very low level of development. If the village of Suva Mountain would become a real tourist motives, being able to attract the tourist clientele, it is necessary to build adequate transportation infrastructure and to secure supply chains. Also, one of the most important prerequisite is to educate the rural population for this type of tourism in order to prevent migration and demographic trends of aging population. In addition it is essential to spread awareness about the necessity of environmental protection, which is the basis for tourism development in this case (Simonović, 1995, p. 342).

First of all, it is necessary to identify the villages which have enough potential to attract the tourists. A commission should be formed that would give certificates to rural households interested in this kind of tourism. These households must meet the requirements in terms of training, arrangement of accommodation, hygiene, etc. It's pretty discouraging fact that the tourism organization of Niš registered only one household (in the village of Bancarevo) which deals with acceptance of tourists while the tourism organization of Gadžin Han does not have any registered rural tourist households. These organizations should call for tender for the classification and to initiate the development of rural tourism. And when a larger number of households involved in tourism, it is necessary to exercise constant control and quality of tourism services.

The potential for development of rural tourism

As mentioned before, there is a wide range of waste potential that could be used in order to activate the tourism product Suva Planina. Most important ones are emphasized as follows:

1. Location of the Suva Planina at the crossroads linking East and West, Europe and Asia. The immediate vicinity of the international European road E-80, this position makes it extremely convenient because passengers in transit constitute a potential tourist clientele. Certainly the vicinity of Niš, as well as a large urban centre, largely determines the position of Suva Planina convenience.
2. Existence of utilities and other infrastructure in most villages is an important prerequisite for development of tourism potential.
3. The existing material base of tourism and receptive accommodation facilities, which can be used more intensively.
4. The possibility of building new as well as expansion and renovation of existing infrastructure facilities necessary for the activation of intense tourism. While this does not including only accommodation facilities (houses and flats), but also the tourist facilities needed for the development of sports and recreational tourism (skiing, hiking, etc.), the transport infrastructure, catering and other facilities.
5. The natural values such as the preserved nature, favourable climate, rivers, springs, wells, rich fauna and flora, specific landforms such as cliffs, etc. Grounds are not only rural but also many other forms of tourism.
6. The rich cultural heritage represented by numerous monuments, monasteries, churches, and the customs, traditions, crafts, architecture, is also one of the important potential. It is important to emphasize that this category is not nearly the value used for the purpose of tourism presentation.
7. Settlements that are for centuries there with a rich culture and tradition, and the population should be involved as a main carrier of tourism development.

Prospects for development of rural tourism

There are numerous ways and opportunities to lead the development of tourism, if not as high, at least to an acceptable level (Ševarlić, 2011). Taking into account its potential, there is a great possibility of the formation of numerous tourist attractions. Tourist offer of Suva Planina, first would involve stationary excursion tourism and the possibilities for practicing winter sports. It is certain that the existing facilities for skiing and other sports and recreational activities are not sufficient. Therefore, the existing ski trails should be upgraded and forests cut down for training and building of new trails on the site Bojanine Vode (Bojanine Water). And beside this, other appropriate places should be found where ski trails could be built.

In urban areas, smaller hotels or similar facilities should be built where the tourists in the winter season would be accommodated. These accommodation facilities should be built in traditional architectural style, being not detrimental to the appearance and physiognomy of the village (Simonović, 1982, p. 145). The best and most economical

solution would be to renovate existing facilities and adapt for this purpose. Every hotel should, in addition to the housing, should also have additional facilities that would complement tourist stay (swimming pools, gyms, sports fields, etc.). Also, the hotel “Trem” in Donji Dušnik, the only existing object of that type, should be trained and open for guests. This hotel would be particularly suitable for the accommodation of student excursions and other major groups (*Stamenković, 2001, p. 67*).

Interested owners of rural households could also be involved in tourism. The rooms and apartments in rural households should be equipped in accordance with the criteria of categorization, but in an authentic, country-style, so that tourists come in contact with the rich culture and tradition.

Surely, in order to make this mountain area profitable, it should be made attractive and appealing to tourists during the other seasons. The tourist stay during other seasons could be completed with the whole range of recreational activities. Considering the existence of numerous, attractive locations, a special attention should be paid to the organization of excursions. Visit to Jelašničko gorge, climbing to the tops of some of the Suva Planina, or visiting Vetenaško or Divljansko monasteries, are only some of the possibilities. In terms of excursion tourism development, it is important that certain locations should be equipped for short stay visitors (benches, tables, gazebos, waste disposal sites, etc.). Providing a simple and good communication with the localities is also important.

The rich fauna and the existence of hunting ground of the “Suva Planina”, is an excellent prerequisite for the development of tourism. If we take into account the fact that the hunting is a very expensive activity, it means that this type of tourism appears as a significant source of revenue.

In creating of tourism product local lifestyles should be presented through various events and activities. Thus, for example, various agricultural activities could be organized involving the participation of tourists (picking fruit, cultivation of the land, etc). Through various events tourists can be introduced local customs, folklore, folk costumes, etc. Particular attention should be focused on events that have already reached a certain stage of development, as is the case with winter ascent of Trem. The need to invest resources and efforts to this event every year rises to a higher level, because the only way they can attract more participants and gain more importance.

Another in a series of opportunities for tourism development is a combination of rural tourism Suva Planina with health and health resort tourism Niška Banja and tourism city of Niš. The point is that rarely takes place in the world in such a short distance from major urbanized whole, there are clean and preserved natural areas. Thus, for example Jelašnička Gorge as a unique natural attraction located just 30 minutes drive from the city of Nis.

Obstacles in the development of rural tourism

As we can talk about many opportunities for the initiation and development of rural tourism Suva Planina, there is also a series of obstacles and constraints. Some of the most important are:

1. Lack of adequate tourism infrastructure starting from the tourist accommodation capacity of equipment. Capacity to accommodate not only scarce, but have very low quality. The same applies to other tourist and catering facilities.
2. Poor transport infrastructure, particularly in terms of local road traffic. It has already been noted that some of the most important routes out of function due to damage; such is the case with the local road to the village of Gornja Studena leading to the site Bojanine Vode.
3. Lack of awareness and education of rural people on all aspects of tourism development, so that even where there are attempts to activate the tourist, they are not conducted in accordance with the categorization.
4. Lack of concern about preserving the environment and natural resources, and their ruination and pollution (in this sense a very good example is the painting of forests on Suva Planina).
5. Ruination of cultural monuments and other objects of great importance for tourism Activation.
6. Lack of adequate human resources for tourism development, as well as legislation in this field.
7. Insufficient use of modern technologies in agriculture, but also in other sectors.
8. The processes of depopulation and aging of rural populations, the extinction of traditional crafts, poverty and economic backwardness.

Capacity for development of rural tourism

As one of the highest mountains of southern Serbia, Suva Planina has been and remains a favourite destination for hikers and nature lovers. That's why it was built on a number of mountain huts in the mid last century. Such is the case for example with hiking on the plateau home plates, which was built back in 1932. Among mountain lodges that are equipped for the admission of tourists and mountaineers which are still functional four of them can be singled out "Studenac", "Ploče", "Čika Dane" and "Čelin Kamen". Mountain lodges are generally intended to be for accommodation of mountaineers, hikers and recreational athletes who engage in various activities on Suva Planina. However, accommodation is not the only purpose of these facilities. They often organize socializing before or after climbing to the peaks of some mountains, including the preparation of traditional foods and drinks. Even though the accommodation is at a lower level of quality, these places provide intimacy and they are always eagerly visited.

One can mention the children's recreation centre "Divljana", located on the slopes of the Suva Planina near the Divljane village, 6 km from the main road Niš - Sofia. The restaurant worth to mention is the ethnic tavern "Kod Brke" in the Jelašnica village. Inn is on the way to Bojanine Vode and within the last few years it has been very popular among the citizens of Niš.

Workers hotel "Trem" (Category B) was completed in 1979. The Hotel offers 80 beds in single, double and triple rooms. There was a restaurant with 150 seats indoors and 60 seats in the hotel garden.

In the whole wide area of Suva planina, there are only two households with rooms and apartments for the reception of guests. Only one is registered. Both of these villages belong to the Municipality of Niška Banja, while in other municipalities, there is no registered household engaged in tourism and accommodation of guests.

The household of Randelović Nikodija is in Bancarevo which is the only registered domestic tourism facility not only in the Municipality of Niška Banja, but on the whole Suva planina. The household offers 15 beds in double rooms. In addition to rooms with private bathroom, there are two double rooms with shared bathroom. The rooms are arranged in three different objects, mostly of recent construction. The rooms are equipped with a kitchen stove, TV, computer, mini library. Heating is electric or based on solid fuel. The yard is spacious, decorated and available for guests staying in this household.

The household of Živković Dragiša located in Donji November offers fully equipped one-bed apartment. The apartment includes the bathroom and a kitchen, separate entrance, and guests can use the garden. The apartment has a TV, and the heating is on electricity. This apartment offers its services within its offer of mountain lodge "Celin Kamen" (Popović, 2001, p. 23).

In some villages of Suva Planina there can be seen the expansion of cottage settlements. Built cottages, as well as those that will be built can successfully be adapted for the reception of guests, although the stay in them is considered a form of tourism. It is particularly suitable for development of tourism, taking into account the fact that the potential tourist clientele come mainly from nearby, large cities. This trend can best be seen in the Prosek village (Mitić, 2006, p. 8).

Conclusion

Through the analysis of natural and manmade values Suva Mountains can come to the conclusion that this area is very suitable for the development of rural tourism. Many villages are still un-spoilt by the onslaught of urbanization. They have preserved the traditional way of life and work, and as such they represent a kind of tourist value. Tourist sites, climate, natural curiosities, and rich cultural heritage - these are all resources that could be used in the formation of the tourism product.

However, despite all the opportunities it is generally difficult to speak about the development of tourism and economic effects. Besides the lack of adequate tourism facilities and infrastructure, in conversation with the residents of villages, I even came to the conclusion that perhaps the biggest obstacle to tourism development disinterest in this type of activity. Most of the rural population is older and does not understand how to facilitate tourism development (Vujović, 2011). While younger and more educated people leave the village going bigger to cities. Even in cases where there is interest, there is lack for of financial base and support of state and local communities.

This implies that it is primarily necessary to develop awareness and educate local residents for tourism development. Professional staff should also be trained, as the main bearers of development. At the same time there is a need to study the needs of target markets and potential tourist clientele, in order to obtain the data required to create the quality tourism offer. Tourism should be developed adhering to the principles of sustainable development and in collaboration with the tourism companies and organizations both at local and national level. Only under such conditions, tourism will become a factor in the development of rural settlements and lead to economic prosperity.

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SUVA PLANINA KAO PROSTOR RAZVOJA SEOSKOG TURIZMA

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Rezime

U radu je načinjen pokušaj da se još jednom podvuče fenomen i značaj seoskog turizma na primeru Suve Planine, jer seoski turizam sve više zaokuplja pažnju potencijalnih turista, koji u njemu vide kompenzaciju onog što gube u velikim aglomeracijama. Suva Planina ima mnoge attribute da razvije ovu vrstu turizma i time obogati turističku ponudu Niša i okoline. Cilj rada je dokazati da prostor Suve planine može biti važan faktor razvoja seoskog turizma. U dokazivanju hipoteze da početni razvoj seoskog turizma treba što pre ubrzati korišćeni su induktivno-deudktivni metod i metode kompracije i deskripcije. Predložene su i mere kako da se ostvari brži razvoj seoskog turizma na ovim prostorima.

Ključne reči: *seoski turizam, ekonomska valorizacija, razvoj, Suva planina.*

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