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POSSIBILITIES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN OPOVO MUNICIPALITY

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Summary

On the territory of Opovo municipality there are many kinds of natural (hydrologic, climatologic and bio-geographical) and anthropogenic touristic values (churches, galleries, monuments of culture). Most of the touristic values, both natural and anthropogenic ones aren't attractive enough for the tourists. Therefore we can speak only about the potentials for rural tourism development. Development of rural tourism gave good economic results in the countries of Western Europe. Surely, there is a great number of less developed countries or those in development that have lost the race of economic development to highly developed countries-and those countries see their chance in rural tourism development. Their main potentials are based on ecologically preserved rural area, anthropogenic heritage, natural resources and healthy food. Although country tourism has been practiced since the year 2000, the results are far behind the actual possibilities. However, there are expectations that nowadays' trend, which is in stagnation, will in the next period become a rising trend, considering the fact that tourist agency "Turist" is taking steps and specific actions to promote rural tourism development. The term rural tourism, as well as the factors influencing competitiveness of a touristic destination, is defined in this paper with an accent on ecology, environmental protection and sustainable development.

Key words: rural tourism, ecology, sustainable development

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Introduction

The World Tourism Organization defines the term tourism destination as “a space that has physical and administrative boundaries defining its management, and images and perceptions defining its market competitiveness. It is a congregation of private and public services with clear boundaries.”⁴ According to domestic authors, the definition of a tourism destination is “more or less defined geographic entity that offers attractive, receptive and communicative factors, i.e., all those natural, social, anthropogenic, cultural, historical, those concerning accessibility and other offers for accommodation, food, recreation facilities and visitors’ entertainment.”⁵ For tourism destination development, natural surrounding is not enough by itself, and additional tourism products should also be developed. It is important to combine these two parameters and thus increase competitiveness.

Physical and geographical characteristics

The municipality of Opovo is situated in South Banat, and it has extremely favorable geostrategic position (crossroads of 3 big market centers-Belgrade and Pancevo are only 30km away, and Zrenjanin is 40km away). It covers an area of 203 km² and has 4 settlements: Baranda, Opovo, Sakule and Sefkerin with the total of 11,016 inhabitants.



4 Source: <http://www.unwto.org>

5 Bakić O;(2002),Marketing menadžment turističke destinacije,Beograd

Type of soil

Chernozem (dark soil), the most fertile type in the Pannonia region, is the most represented type of soil, which favors intensive agriculture, so approximately 60% of population is involved in agriculture in relation to the total number of employed people.

Climate conditions

Moderate-continental climate prevails in the area. It is noticeable that autumn is warmer than spring. As far as winds are concerned, the most often one is kosava- south-eastern wind, and then there are the winds blowing from the Northeast and the South.

Hydrology

The area of Opovo municipality is rich in waters. The most important is the Tamis River, but there are also natural and artificial lakes, ponds and canals. The Tamis flows 29 km through the territory of Opovo municipality. Owing to these environmental conditions, there is a lot of sports fishing going on, so passionate fishermen both from nearby and far away surroundings (Belgrade, Pancevo, Centa, Grocka) come to the banks of the Tamis River on daily basis. They enjoy fishing and spending time in a natural oasis where they can find peace and relaxation away from the city noise. Apart from the Tamis, sport fishing is practiced on an artificial lake “Saran” (“Carp”) in Baranda. The coast is arranged, there are equipped spots for fishermen where they are protected from wind and rain. There is also an attractive complex of restaurants with domestic cuisine. The Tamis is a special locality exquisitely suitable for development of hunting and fishing tourism. Having that in mind, different activities for arranging the banks and completely equipping them for sports hunting and fishing tourism are planned in the near future.




The Tamis regatta

Flora and fauna

Forests take 1313 ha i.e. 10 % of the total territory of the municipality. Bigger forest complexes are found near the course of the Tamis. Those are mixed and partially autochthonous forests of poplar, willow, acacia and ash. The forests protect waterpower engineering objects from high level of water, they help decrease water wave and regulate climate factors (they reduce extreme temperatures and kosava wind blows). It is significant that the forests are situated near water and on the grounds not suitable for intensive agriculture.⁶

Natural resources give habitat for different animal species. In the forests we can find does, foxes, rabbits, pheasants, field partridges, quails and wild boars. Special interests of the hunters are wild ducks and wild geese on the Tamis and in nearby swamp areas.

Table 1. Wild animals in numbers

Does	192	
Rabbits	1470	
Pheasants	320	
Partridges	64	
Wild ducks	440	
Wild geese	60	
Wild boars	216	

Hunting trophies

Different and numerous wild animals are a precondition for an attractive weekend sports hunting. To have this type of tourism placed in the right position it is necessary to work on enlargement of the number of animals. Just the same, the local hunting society should be more engaged in promoting it.

Monuments of culture

The gallery "Jovan Popovic" was built in 1970 as a specialized institution for exhibitions. There are different kinds of exhibitions at the gallery throughout the year, from museum exhibits to modern art works. An art colony, a cultural manifestation which gathers artists from different parts of the country and the surrounding countries too, is also organized here. The gallery owns a collection of 177 works of art.

Serbian orthodox church-iconostasis, the work of Stevan Todorovic from 1895 and six icons from the second half of the 18th century (under the protection of the Institute Monuments).for Protection of the Cultural

⁶ Strategija lokalnog održivog razvoja opštine Opovo;(2007),Opovo,pp 13

Sakule: Serbian orthodox church-iconostasis of the choir and the throne-the work of Konstantin Pantelic from 1856

Baranda-Serbian orthodox church-the Throne Gospel by Lavov from 1690 (under the protecton of the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments)

Sefkerin-Serbian orthodox church-“Srbljak” published in 1761 is in the Serbian Orthodox Church library

Architectonic heritage

The building of an old school in the center of Opovo, covering the area of 1500m², is known as Villa Helena. It was built in 1902 and there are plans to adapt it and turn it into a museum.



Architectonic heritage, Villa Miss Helena



Archeological heritage, a figurine 3500 B.C.

On the territory between Opovo and Sefkerin there is an archaeological site, where some objects made of fired clay were uncovered (a figurine, altars, bowls) dating from 2500 B.C. These objects are presently in the depot of the museum in Pancevo, although there is an intention to have them exhibited in an adequate place in Opovo (villa MISS HELENA).

Historical figures

Jovan Popovic, a painter (Opovo 1810-Pancevo 1864)

He finished the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in 1842. He painted iconostases for the churches in Dolovo (Pancevo municipality), Crepaja (Kovacica municipality), and started working on the iconostasis of the church in Tomasevac (Zrenjanin municipality), but death kept him from finishing it. The gallery in Opovo got its name after him.

Stevan Milosavljevic, a painter (Opovo 1886-Pancevo 1926)

He finished the Academy of Art in Munich in 1905. He was a member of war

painters from the 1912 wars, and it was in that period that his best works were painted. He painted the iconostasis in Starcevo (Pancevo municipality)

Zoran Petrovic, a painter (Sakule 1921-Belgrade 1996)

He finished Academy of Arts in 1948 and worked as a full professor there until he retired. Apart from being a painter, he was a sculptor and a painter also. His most famous work is “Selo Sakule, a u Banatu”.

Borislav Jankulov, historian (Sefkerin 1878-Jasa Tomic 1969)

As a cadet of Matica srpska, he finished school in Budapest, history and geography major. In 1904 in Pest he got his Ph.D., and after that he worked as a full professor in Novi Sad. He is the founder of the Trading Academy in Pancevo, he also founded the City museum in Pancevo in 1919 and the city library in Pancevo. He was the founder of the first People’s University in the former state.

Olimpijada Pupin, born Milovanov, mother of Mihajlo Pupin, originates from Opovo

Dragan Mecavin (Opovo 1964-), a naïve painter

He is a member of Anthology of Serbian Naïve Art with his painting “Pastir trazi dno neba” (“Shepherd’s looking for the bottom of the sky”). He also painted “Pava”-the legend of how Opovo got its name. He has had solo exhibitions in Serbia and abroad. He is expected to give his best in years to come.

Manifestations

The most famous manifestation is “Shepherds’ days” in Sakule. This event traditionally takes place every year in March. Cattle breeders gather and prepare, and then taste domestic Banat cuisine specialties, there are also exhibitions of hand-made objects and the highlight of the manifestation is a widely famous donkey race. All these are followed by versatile cultural and artistic programs and many distinguished people from public life attend. Then there is a traditional art colony held every year on May 22nd at the “Jovan Popovic” gallery in Opovo, followed by the exhibition of the participants; there is a competition of sport fishermen, regatta on the Tamis River, and fiacre parade. The Country Olympics in Sefkerin takes place on August 4th, and it is also followed by preparation of some traditional dishes: stew, chowder and Banat strudel.

Accommodation

There is a “B” category hotel in Opovo with the capacity of 40 beds, 18 rooms and one apartment, conference hall with 30 seats, dining hall with 200 seats, aperitif hall and a terrace. In private sector the number of households interested in adapting rooms for accommodation is high and rising, especially near the banks of the Tamis River.



Hotel "Stari Banat" ("Old Banat")

Table 2. Accommodation and number of nights spent in a period 2007-2009

Year	Accommodation	Hotel accommodation	Private accommodation	Number of nights spent	Number of nights spent in a hotel	Number of nights spent in private accommodation	Average number of nights
2007.	88	40	48	652	86	566	7,4
2008.	96	40	56	568	62	506	5,9
2009.	101	40	61	609	73	536	6,0

Source: Tourist agency "Tourist"

Looking at the number of beds and the average number of nights spent during these last three years, it is noticeable that the number of nights spent in private accommodation is increasing. Why? Because people have a stronger need to spend time in natural surroundings that create the sense of relaxation, calmness and freedom opposed to life in the urban surroundings.

Table 3. Number of tourist facilities in the municipality of Opovo

Naselja Settlements	Number
Opovo	9
Sakule	3
Sefkerin	6
Baranda	1
Ukupno Total	19

Source: Strategija lokalnog održivog razvoja opštine Opovo; (2007), Opovo, pp28

It is obvious that people recognize country tourism as one of the profitable activities that is on the edge of expansion. We hope that after the realization of the SPA center in Baranda project, municipality of Opovo will become the leading destination of health tourism in the region.

Sports courts

For sports and entertainment in Opovo, there is a football court, a basketball court, a volleyball court, a tennis court and an athletic running track. During summer months football, basketball and volleyball tournaments are organized and held here. With an intention of contributing to development and popularization of sports and recreation tourism, as a part of a tourist offer of the municipality of Opovo, building a sports recreation center is in plan, and the location has already been found.

Health and treatment offers as touristic potentials

On the territory of Opovo municipality there is a deposit of mud bath in the settlement of Baranda, 3km away from Opovo. The results of different analyses point to a great opportunity and validity of opening a spa health resort. The complete research was done in the central laboratory of NIS NAFTAFAS in Novi Sad, and the opinion of therapeutic value and indications for its use was given by the Institute for Rehabilitation-department of balneo-climatology in Belgrade. Mud baths can be used as a healing agent for the following diseases: degenerative joint disease, extra-articular rheumatoid arthritis, inflammatory rheumatism in early stages, conditions after bone breaks and traumas, chronic illnesses of genito-urinary tract.⁷

Conclusion

Analyzing all the above mentioned parameters, basic and additional contents, environmental conditions, climate, hospitality of people and geographic position, the municipality of Opovo, although the smallest one in South Banat, has all preconditions needed to become an attractive destination of Banat rural tourism. But what are the reasons it hasn't become one yet?

- Local political willingness does not exist, the politicians do not recognize the values of this territory enough to valorize it on the market
- There aren't enough marketing activities that would promote existing facilities and be a connection with potential investors who are willing to build here

Local tourist program, in order to be realized, has to be supported:

- Financially (by the local self-government, secretariat, ministry)
- Fiscal (tax relief and benefits when getting means and equipment)

⁷ The author was a member of the working group which was engaged in making a general design of a spa complex "SPA Center" in Baranda in 2008.

On the other hand, why do tourists return?

Tourists return because for most of them spending time here is an escape from the urban jungle, it is refreshment and the way to “charge batteries”. But it is also more than that. By being in touch and making friends with the locals, classic boundaries of tourism are broken, intimate atmosphere is created (as opposed to hotel atmosphere) and the guest feels as at home. For the guest it means returning to nature, for the host it means broadening horizons through impregnation of the traditional and modern. It is revival of the country, it is overall development

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