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## RISK MANAGEMENT IN RURAL TOURISM

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### Abstract

*Tourism today presupposes an integrated quality of facilities and services for its development, as well as the total quality of tourism products offered to consumers. The risks that arise in every step of creation, promotion, presentation, marketing and sales of rural products have a constant influence on the growth and development of rural tourism market. People create the needs not only considering the change in life and learning about other cultural goods, but also the need for isolation in order to achieve better health, psycho-physical state and stability. Regions that attract many tourists are rural areas. Rural areas could be classified in the category, as well as ecological and protected areas and places that can meet cultural and recreational needs of a visitor. As we know, tourism is sensitive to all negative phenomena in the natural environment, as well as in social events. In the era of terrorism, global warming, natural disasters and hostilities that govern the world we have to understand that the time of safety and security is the past. Therefore, for the development of tourism in rural destination it is extremely important to envisage all the weaknesses that occur in the field of safety and security.*

**Key words:** *risk management, rural destinations, integrated quality of space, environment, terrorism*

### Introduction

Tourism is very sensitive to all negative phenomena with both, natural environment and social events. For the development of tourism in a destination it is extremely important to perceive all the weaknesses that occur in the field of safety and security. Let us list some that can be used by not well-intentional visitors. These are (Štetić 2003):

1. Under-developed network of security in a destination;

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2. Poor training of local residents;
3. Desire for foreign currency inflows without adequate control (money laundering);
4. Inadequate involvement of local people in tourism development;
5. Different economic development of local community and the countries of tourist demand;
6. Developing illegal forms of tourism (poaching, sex tourism ...);
7. Inappropriate behavior of tourists (as opposed to customs and religion of a local community);
8. Infiltration of terrorists into the local economy;
9. Inability to control mass tourist traffic and seasonal labor in a tourist destination;
10. Tourism becomes a "cover" for terrorist activities...

A tourist destination is only a fraction of the space when it comes to terrorist activity. Let us recall only some countries and tourist destinations where terrorists acted in the last decade of the twentieth and early twenty-first century and carried out their attacks: the USA (New York), Egypt (Cairo, Sharm el Sheikh ...), Israel, Spain (Madrid), the United Kingdom (London), Kenya, Algeria, Bali, Morocco, Russia, Philippines ... The list is, unfortunately, much longer with more and more victims. Considering all these countries, it can be noticed that they are on different continents, that they have different kinds of tourist destinations (city tourist centers, centers of photo safari, residence tourism, pilgrimage, cultural tourism ...), different religions... but have one common trait: they are popular tourist countries and developed tourist destinations. This is exactly what terrorists need: great popularity and publicity for their purposes, regardless of the type and amount of human casualties and material damage. Actually, their main motto is "*the more ... the better ...*".

Everything is changing. The bases for tourism development are not only natural and cultural resources, but above all security. To achieve this, we need to talk about security strategy in tourism and create safe tourist destinations. In order to create a safe tourist destination we must pay attention to:

- Security of all tourists and visitors;
- Safety of employees in tourism and other activities;
- Security of space;
- Environmental security;
- Economic security;
- Creation of a positive image in the field of security.

This means that every country which in the future wants to be on the world tourist map must know and be able to put into practice the basics of security in each and every tourist destination in the country as a whole. The task is neither easy nor simple. Therefore, that is why we especially talk about the implementation of "Risk Management" in tourism.

The questions are being posed: "What about tourism, about tourist destinations? Are the risks the factors that will make future directions of the development of tourist destinations?" The fact is that a tourist destination without recognizing the risks and their prevention cannot talk about further development of tourism in the destination.

The new rural development policy of the enlarged Union (EU - 27) implies the elaboration of different models of development according to specific conditions and needs of the territory. This is achieved by the appropriate adjustment measures, and for Serbia it would be very important (Todorović, Štetić 2009):

- ✓ to increase the competitiveness of supporting the restructuring of the agricultural sector;
- ✓ to improve the environment and natural landscapes through land management
- ✓ to diversify rural economy;
- ✓ to improve quality of life in the countryside;
- ✓ to give support to implementation of local strategies for rural development
- ✓ Implementing LEADER approach.

To identify innovations in terms of rural development is not an easy task, considering that it depends on the spatial, economic, productive, social, cultural and other factors. In this sense, rural areas are faced with the need to use new opportunities, which certainly is not always easy to recognize and requires commitment, creativity and a new view on resources. In this sense, the realization of the LEADER<sup>2</sup> program concept can facilitate understanding of the general platform of rural development.

### **Risk management in rural areas**

Rural tourism destinations are facing increasing challenges in the domestic and international markets. An increasing number of the world's population creates a greater impact on the environment and social background. The success of tourism development in rural areas depends on the ability of local communities and destinations to attract as many tourists as possible and to preserve resources for future generations. (Bramwell 1994, Štetić 2003). According to that, we can say that tourism can be developed in rural areas where population recognized importance of tourism.

Destination development is the key to preserving natural and cultural resources on which tourism depends (Štetić 2001). Therefore, the interaction among public sector, tourist destination marketing, private sector and local communities is extremely important. In this way, all the participants together can more effectively manage local - global influences in their natural and cultural resources. The effective development of a rural tourism destination is an important prerequisite for the development of certain parts of the country.

Safety is a priority issue when tourists visit a rural tourism destination, or when they take part in picking products or other activities on the farm, or when they visit a farm. Customers' safety is largely the responsibility of the host and the members of his household. Therefore we must be aware of the risks and make risk assessment of rural

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2 (French: Liaison entre l'action pour le développement de l'économie rural; English: Links Between Actions for the Development of Rural Economy)

households or a facility in ecotourism and prepare them for safe and pleasant visit and stay for tourists.

Rural tourism is a mutually beneficial exchange between farmers and residents of urban areas. On one hand, farmers learn about the city's needs, on the other, the inhabitants of the city destinations are enabled to learn about farms and enjoy the outdoors. Also, farm income is increased if the entrance to the farm is charged, or if products are sold to visitors. However, visits to farms carry some risk, as well as the potential responsibility of the owner of the farm in case of accidents or visitors' injuries. Therefore, there is a need to apply responsibly strategies for risk management in order to reduce risk exposures to a minimum.

The spaces that encourage the development of tourism require the creation of detailed development plans and certain investments, so that tourist visits reach its maximum from year to year (Čomić, Kosar, Štetić 2001). Local destinations include different segments of tourism offer, shareholders and those who invest to form larger destinations. Destinations may be different in rank, ranging from those covering the whole country (e.g. Serbia), a region (eg. Eastern Serbia), a mountain (e.g. Stara planina), a village (e.g. Knić) or urban or isolated areas (e.g. Kalemegdan or Sirogojno).

The new concept of tourism destination management (Štetić, et al 2009) adopts a system where environmental, physical and social factors are linked to different networks and institutional structures. Traditionally, the management of rural destination should represent interests of local communities. Their mission is to develop the village and create the image of rural destinations in order to attract and increase the number of visitors. (Roberts , 2001). Therefore, rural destinations, countries and travel agencies should focus their advertising campaigns on tourism activities. A rural tourism destination that wants to take a good position in the domestic and international tourism market should be guided by basic principles of sustainable development while respecting the demands of clients for the highest quality of offered resources and services. For that reason, the research and evaluation of rural tourism destination management must be very carefully and deliberately approached. If all participants are acting together in determining what they really want from tourism and what way they want to place it, they will all be better off (Butler, Hall, Jenkins, 1998).

### **Risk Control and Reduction**

One of the essentially important tools in the fight against risk is insurance on responsibility (Page, Getz 1997). Before rural destination start receiving tourists, they have to check security of rural destination, then the host should:

- identify the places that the guests visit, the activities in which they take part, how they will be monitored, precautions to be taken, and all rules of conduct and warnings should be put in visible places;
- plan emergency procedures and always have a box with a well-equipped first-aid on hand; a plan for the procedures in case of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and fires should also be developed;

- recommend visitors to wear the appropriate footwear (closed-toes shoes, sneakers or deep shoes, rather than sandals) and clothing;
- provide guests with special instructions, and explain to them that it is a farm household; since some accidents always go with an area (uneven ground, insects, climate, odors), the visitors have to accept any such risk, and exercise some precaution measures;
- clearly mark the places which are not allowed for visitors, and sites that are designated for visitors; fence in other parts or block access to them if they may be dangerous for visitors.

### **Facilities and equipment in rural destination**

In planning tourism development on a property it must be taken into account that it has adequate space and the facility equipped to provide quality services in rural tourism. Therefore, the space that will be used by visitors for various purposes must be well planned.

- In most countries it is required that cars *are parked* in a special place, off-road.
- If *buses* must be parked away from the property, plan the places for it
- Are there clean, well-equipped public toilets in use? If not consider renting portable toilets.
- *Security*: Depending on the type of activities or events in rural destinations, you may need to hire extra help to work in order to eliminate any possible danger to visitors.
- Always leave *ladders* away from trees and public spaces in order to avoid attempts to climb. This applies particularly to younger visitors.
- *Parking tractors and attachments* within sight, but beyond the area intended for visitors. Agricultural equipment is something that fascinates people, however, tractors often become objects to which children climb .
- *Pesticides, herbicides* and other products intended for use on the farm should be safely stored, in a safe place, away from public areas.
- *Craft workshops* and repair shops are among the most dangerous areas and therefore the access to such places should be limited.

### **Animals in the rural destination**

Any contact with animals must be monitored for the visitors' safety. Animals often change behavior when they are surrounded by a group of people or when strangers approach them. Animals should be in a confined space with limited access for visitors, and each physical contact should be monitored. Problem can be odors, ventilation, manure, flies and pesticides in the parts of the farm where visitors might get behind.

Only a very calm and friendly dog can be close to visitors, and they should be warned that puppies also have sharp teeth so that they can cause injury or make some damage. Cats and kittens have sharp claws and teeth.

*Goats and sheep* are increasingly being used as the animals that visitors can touch. Since they are ruminants and have no upper front teeth, visitors can more safely

feed them out of hand than horses that have upper teeth.

*Geese* can be very aggressive. Chickens, ducks and other poultry are suitable for feeding. *Cattle* and calves should be in a separate box for grooming, also manual milking of cows is not recommended.

*Horses and ponies* can bite. Riding horses and ponies require special rules, safety precautions and insurance.

A *sign* with the inscription: "Wash your hands after contact with animals" should be put and a place and means for washing and drying hands or a device for sanitation should be provided.

It is especially important to take care of water bodies, so that their visitors do not get too much closer to well, pool or pond, and to pay attention to children irrespective of whether their parents are present.

*Rides on a trailer with hay* are extremely popular among rural visitors, so extra precautions should be taken. For this activity you need additional persecution. Maximum number of people who can simultaneously be driven safely on the trailer should be determined. All participants in the ride should obey some rules: not to smoke, to sit during driving and to remove their feet away from the wheels. Tractors should not move faster than the speed of an adult who runs an easy pace.

## Conclusion

We are witnessing the risk of life and risky experiences, not only worldwide but also in our immediate vicinity. Often we do not think about them until these sporadic events turn into a crisis. However, is this the right way of thinking and acting when considering tourism and especially a tourist destination? The old proverb says, "*Prevention is better than cure*".

The basic motivation that drives millions of people to engage in tourist movements are rest and recreation, natural motifs, climate, cultural and historical monuments, history, customs and folklore. Studying the development of tourism, we have perceived its regional distribution and selection of destinations according to segments of tourist demand. This affects the creation of certain tourist macro, meso and micro regions. When considering rural tourism, these regions are usually studied at the micro-level because of their disconnected and sporadic occurrence.

In addition to famous tourist destinations, more and more new potential or just developed tourist destinations sprout. By their attractive, receptive and communicative factors, together with the development of local communities, they begin to include in tourist flows. Many of them are in rural areas and according to their potentials start to develop different forms of tourism. Through valorization of individual elements or total resources that are on disposal of rural destinations, specific tourist destinations are created.

By presenting only a small number of requests and problems posed in the management of risks in rural tourism with the objective to develop and place it, we have just raised a very important topic for further tourism development. However, as always,

there are different opinions about the importance and predominance of certain issues in relation to others. What is certain in the development of rural tourism destinations are the problems and risks that need to be overcome and resolved.

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