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**TOURISM
IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Tourism product as a factor of competitiveness of
the Serbian economy and experiences of other countries



**THEMATIC
PROCEEDINGS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC
FACULTY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT
AND TOURISM IN VRNJAČKA BANJA**



DEVELOPMENT OF SELECTIVE RURAL TOURISM PRODUCTS AS FACTOR FOR COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

Rural areas are characterized with potentials that can improve development through different activities among which tourism is identified as the important part of their sustainable development. Rural tourism enables valorization of rural potentials, and contributes to their reasonable use as a basis for the creation of different tourism products in favor of the increased competitiveness on tourist market.

Rural tourism development is based on the scope of different content of the tourist offer and creation of specific products that are diverse, and according to their characteristics can be grouped, and combined by the creators of tourism products. The combination of different types of tourism products and services is very crucial for a precisely targeted specific market segments and their needs.

Therefore, a qualitative and quantitative approach in this paper is projected for identification of the indicators that will define rural tourism products' values in rural areas as components for their competitiveness.

Key words: Tourism Development, Rural Tourism, Tourism Products, Competitiveness, Selective Tourism Forms

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Introduction

Tourism in rural areas contributes to increased possibilities for socio-economic development and is based on the comprehensiveness of the tourist offer and creation of specific products. The services of rural tourism differ according to their characteristics, and often they are

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grouped and combined as specific tourist products on tourist market. Such created services can appear as package services or products. Created with aim to meet the variable tourist needs, the combination of different types of tourist products and services is usually targeted to specific market segments and their needs. Organizational forms have an active attitude, which is consistent with the measures to be taken in order to provide full satisfaction of tourists. When combining concrete products, goods and services, qualitative and quantitative components should be taken into consideration especially within the context of creation of competitive products.

The development of rural tourism enables vitalization and affirmation of rural areas, and it prevents emigration of rural population towards urban areas. It also contributes to reasonable use of existing resources in non-developed areas with which it creates basis for economic development (Marinoski et al., 2012). According to the authors, rural tourism allows the creation of an alternative source of income in the non-agricultural sector for rural dwellers, and it can contribute to the revival of forgotten traditional crafts and arts. Therefore, the creation of selective rural tourism products can contribute to regions' tourism competitiveness. According to Getz (1998), rural tourism is being promoted increasingly as a counterpoint to mass, package-type tourism in destination areas. Further, Sharpley (2002) argues that tourism is considered as an effective catalyst of rural socio-economic development and regeneration of rural areas. Different authors (Bandara, 2001; Cater, 1987; Dimitrovski et al., 2011; Dimitrov & Petrevska, 2012; Harrison, 2001; Lane, 1994; Marinoski et al., 2012; Moric, 2013; Moscardo, 2008; Nestoroska et al., 2016) emphasize the role of tourism for economic development of rural areas in developing countries.

Since tourism is an economic activity whose competitiveness is based on comparative advantages or resources marking a certain area, it automatically focuses mainly on sustainability of precisely those resources, which present the basis of tourist offer. The tourism products development depends on attractive and receptive characteristics that the area possesses, the level of aspirations of tourist demand and the quality of connectivity of the area. In addition, rural tourism should include the diversity of rural areas' potentials as solid basis for tourist offer composition.

This paper aims to present the advantages of the development of selective rural tourism products as potentials for rural tourism development. The research in this paper is realized through the determination of resources, needs and possibilities for development of selective rural tourism products that can contribute in competitiveness of rural regions.

Rural areas and rural tourism development

Relation between rural areas and rural tourism can be seen in the range of different activities, services and amenities provided by locals in order to attract tourists and create additional incomes that will contribute to the improved quality of life. Although rural areas are mostly perceived as areas that are related to agricultural activities, their development has social, economic and environmental aspects.

Rural tourism can be understood as any form of tourism in rural areas, where natural and cultural values are incorporated in the tourist offer for benefiting the local community economically and socially. Different and comprehensive activities enable interaction between the tourists and local population that leads towards tourism experience. Many rural areas can facilitate tourism because most of the population in these areas is hospitable to the visitors.

The tourism development for many rural areas understands the increased tourist visit, increase of tourist expenditure, improved comprehensiveness of tourist offer, increased quality and scope of tourism products, as well as activation of resources and harmonization of the activities with the values of the environment. Also, tourism through its development leads towards the creation of new selective forms. They are related to the ways of the promotion and participation on the tourism market and competitive approach, use of resources and ensuring the satisfaction of visitors. Development and market character caused potential selective approach. Thus, based on the value of local and regional environment leads to the founding of new forms of tourism products that have a contemporary character.

Rural tourism plays an important role in supporting the development of rural areas as new tourist destinations. Tourism in rural areas can become an important driver for their socio-cultural development and integrated part of economic development of the rural environment in general. Although, mainly tourism and recreation in rural areas are in tourist focus

because of the higher interest of visitors for natural environment in rural areas, culture plays an important role also. According to Nestoroska & Marinoski (2017), “the potentials of tourism development in rural areas are related with the presence of the natural and cultural resources and values that contribute to the characteristics of activities and services which include recreational, cultural, educational and gastronomic components”. Further, the authors note that the recreational activities can consist of different forms of participation in the agricultural activities, camping, or practicing picnicking, sightseeing, walking, cross-country running, rock climbing, mountaineering, horse riding, cycling, bird watching, hunting, fishing, herbs collecting, picking the fruit, participation in traditional sport and recreational games and competitions and training activities. The components of cultural activities are mainly manifested with visits to cultural and historical attractions, attending to different events, or participation in traditional creative activities as: pottery, blacksmithing, woodcarving, naïve art painting, and participation in folk dance and song activities. Rural areas can also provide educational activities mainly in manner of organizing excursions or themed schools in nature, which can increase students’ knowledge for natural environment through “direct contact with the nature”. In addition, different gastronomic activities related to participation in the traditional food production, participation in preparation and serving of daily meals, or organization of traditional events can also enrich rural tourism offer in rural areas.

Considering the scope of activities that can be practiced by creating different tourism products, tourism in rural regions can play important role in the development of such regions. Moreover, it can lead towards the initiation of activities related to spatial planning and valorization of economic resources, new directions for agriculture and forest development, environmental protection, and resolving social problems in rural areas. This is particularly important for the improvement of quality of life in rural areas and encouragement of diversification of the rural economy.

Since rural tourism is an integrated part of tourism development, many countries consider it as an important tool for diversified and enriched tourist offer because it attracts attention for visitors on local, regional, national and international level. The EU framework for rural development within the EU policy for rural development for the period 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2014) recognizes the importance of tourism for

rural areas development within the six common EU priorities that are related to fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas; enhancing the viability and competitiveness of all types of agriculture, and promoting innovative farm technologies and sustainable forest management; promoting food chain organization, animal welfare and risk management in agriculture; restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry; promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors; and promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas. It indicates that tourism has its place among identified priorities particularly in the area of knowledge transfer and innovation in rural areas, and the promotion of social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

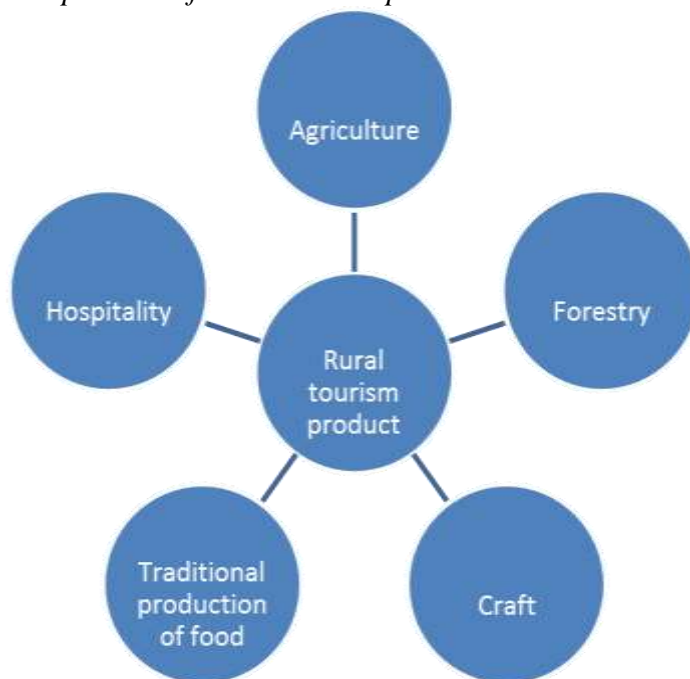
Development of competitive selective rural tourist products

Development of rural tourism is based on the comprehensiveness of the tourist offer and creation of specific products. The services of this type of tourism are varied according to their characteristics, and the way they are organized in order to meet heterogeneous tourist needs. Also, the combination of different types of tourism products and services that are precisely targeted to specific market segments and also their needs. The wide variety of activities that constitute different tourist products in rural tourism involve different types of tourism (Petrevska & Nestoroska, 2015) When combining concrete products, goods and services, very important are qualitative and quantitative components as well as the price of the created product. This should have positive influence on tourists as consumers. With these creative activities, the total price of the product or service should not be higher than the sum of the separate prices. In order to approach the optimal consideration of the characteristics of tourism product it is necessary to have knowledge about the components that determine it as a theoretical and practical category. The tourist product should be observed by using the following approaches: conceptually-content features; elements; creation approach; promotion; realization, and consideration of the results of the activities.

The definition of conceptually-content characteristics of the tourist product in rural areas is based on the fact that tourism cannot be determined just as an economic category. This is an area, or activity, that consists of several categories. Tourism is comprised of the participation

of economic and non-economic sectors (Figure 1). They can be defined as industries that are closely linked to tourism and those that do not have such character. In rural tourism, hospitality, agriculture, manufacturing, transport, trade and cultural traditions have an important place. Each of them, which is an integral part of the tourism sector, has its own characteristics, including their products, but they are usually interconnected. The concept of tourist product understands the combination of services and products packed as one product. In a figurative sense, they may be considered a tourist product.

Figure 1: *Composition of rural tourism product*



Source: *Authors' observation*

The combination of concrete products and services is the most comprehensive form of tourist products and it often occurs as a tourist package. Therefore, rural tourism products can be defined in three ways:

- - products that belong to specific sectors that include tourism;
- - products that belong to a combination of services and specific products and specific branches;
- - products that provide a combination of services, goods and specific products of different branches or travel arrangements.

Products that belong to specific sectors that includes tourism

Rural tourism is characterized by the participation of economic sectors with which it is closely related. Thus, created tourism products have specific thematic character and as such, they can be branded. Tourism is most directly connected to *agriculture*. Tourism, along with traditional farming and livestock breeding, is the most important and leading sector in rural development. Considering this role and the close relation, agriculture produces concrete products that are successfully used in this form of tourist activities, and, more importantly, the food is usually characteristic for the concrete rural region. *Traditional production of food* and the use of food in tourism has particular importance in gastronomic offer as a part of rural tourism products. The relation between food production and tourism development is question to which due attention is paid by different authors (Alvensleben, 2000; Dimara & Scuras, 2005; Pechlaner et al., 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004).

Forestry as a branch of economic activities that deals with the preservation and enhancement of forest fund can be used for practicing certain rural tourism activities as panoramic views of forests, bird and animal watching and photography, collecting herbs, training athletes in nature, and others. *Craft* as traditional activity and component of cultural heritage can be included as a component of rural tourism offer and an element for creation of rural tourism products. It can also be incorporated in creative activities: pottery, goldsmith, woodcarving, knitting embroidery, tapestry making, weaving and other crafts. *Hospitality*, along with agriculture, is the most important economic sector that contributes to the creation of differentiated tourist products. Depending on the type of accommodation, facilities are mostly characterized with traditional architecture specific for the rural areas. Restaurants, inns, or taverns are facilities that are also a segment of hospitality offer in rural tourism. The preparation and tasting of food and drinks in facilities designated for this purpose or within the household in rural areas are interesting products that enable tourists to participate actively and experience new adventures.

Services are usually associated with a specific product, but can be extracted and promoted as a specific segment of tourist offer. The catering services should include the following: accommodation service, serving food and drinks, food specialties and entertainment. They are, in a figurative sense, also treated as products. In rural tourism, usually prevails the accommodation in households, which are established as

accommodation offer, regardless of the other options that are available. A similar character have entertainment events which are organized by households or catering businesses in rural areas. These events and celebrations, ceremonies and feasts are good occasions to qualify them as a separate tourist products in the context of households that operate in accordance with the norms of hospitality and catering facilities themselves. The mentioned examples of selective products are most evident forms of rural tourist products.

Products that are combination of services and concrete products of specific branch

This group consists of related tourism products or package services, which is necessary for their creation with all components that are characteristic and for other combinations such tourist arrangements. Analogous to the previous forms which are related to individual services and specific products, also in this case it is about the products within certain economic and non-economic sectors.

Thus, as an agricultural product, may be considered the organic food and its consumption by tourists. Livestock products, combined with for example cheese production can be offered as activities where tourists will actively participate. In forestry a combined product would be: forest tour, bird watching and photographing animals. Crafts can tour the combined creative activities of different character in a similar way as in the previous examples. The combination of products and services is particularly evident in the creation of hospitality products. In this regard, special evenings and gala dinners, and presentations of specialties can be offered as specific catering products. They can be turned into a tourist tour branded thematic products.

Products that provide combination of services and goods from various branches.

The combination of different services, goods and specific products from various branches and activities is a basis for a complex tourist product that is appropriate to tour arrangement packages. Services are diverse, both in terms of their characteristics (agriculture, forestry, crafts, or traditional preparation of food), and their organization. Often they are combined and grouped in accordance to the arranged promotion on tourist

market through the tourist agencies or other modern forms such as the internet.

In order to meet the variable needs of tourist, different approaches with interesting content are applied. The combination of services, as well as tourist products in the form of tourist packages, depends on the attractive and receptive values in rural communities, but also on the needs of tourists. The created products are targeted towards specific market segments and their needs. When combining products and services by different stakeholders, the cost of these products should be considered, because, besides the quality, they influence on tourists to be encouraged to visit certain rural area as result of the attractiveness of rural tourist products. The price of these types of tourist products includes individual prices, and is usually competitive to the total sum of the individual price of each product or concrete service. This character of lump price stems from the fact that in the creation of the package products organizer, which is usually travel agency, engages services and concrete products reduced amount in the prices. Further, the reduction in the value of prices of a particular product or service to another leads to a balanced mechanism. Services and concrete products in the package should be systematized structurally, spatially and synchronized timely. Tourist services have to be performed and delivered under unique conditions.

Tourist products of combined character in rural areas

The development of rural tourism in the wider area of different regional content, among other implications is reflected in the improvement of tourism products, and thus on their competitive character on the tourist market. Competitiveness leads to the improved tourist offer at different spatial levels, which on the other hand leads to the creation of quality products. Also, the simultaneous development of tourist demand and its increase, stipulates the creation of new tourist products in different forms and in different qualitative and quantitative terms. It is not only a reason for the increased number of tourists, but also for products' enriched content. Therefore, on the tourist market there is an increased range of tourist products that are diversified and differentiated upon several criteria.

Competitiveness of tourist products in rural tourist destinations should be considered by the basic elements of comparative advantage of rural areas that constitute the available resources in destination, and ability to use

these resources effectively (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Further, Kulcsar (2009) states that the support of tourism stakeholders is essential for successful development and sustainability of tourism and could help to improve destination competitiveness. Accordingly, competitiveness appears to be linked to the rural areas' ability to deliver goods and services that will be composed into selective and competitive rural tourist products.

The tourist activity in these tourist products is comprised of two dominant spatial indications. The first is the emissive sphere from which tourists have their origin, and these are spheres where travel needs are manifested as a result of the influence of different objective and subjective motives. The other, second sphere is the attractive or receptive sphere where tourist arrivals/visits occur, and tourists' needs are met. According to this criterion, we can distinguish two types of tourist products as: emissive, and receptive.

Emissive arrangements, as tourism products are the combination of specific products and services that are offered to tourists in the place of their permanent residence. Outbound tourism products are aimed for the tourist clientele, mainly from urban centers that aspire to travel to rural areas.

Receptive tourist products are the combination of tourist services and specific products, which are offered in rural areas, where tourists come and in which the tourist needs are met, and satisfied through different content of goods and services. These are the products that include different values of receptive tourist attractions and are created for tourists' consumption.

The interest of rural areas is to create such arrangements that will be suitable to fulfill tourists' needs. The realization of receptive tourist products enables increased financial incomes, encourage the future development of rural tourism and other forms of tourism as well as general development of rural areas. The characteristic of emissive tourist products is that they generate the financial outflow from urban to rural areas.

Another approach to tourist arrangements classification is on the basis of the criteria of the way of their creation. Based on this criterion, we can distinguish two types: published and commissioned arrangements

(Marinoski, 2002). Published tourist arrangements are tourist products that are created with combined services and goods depending on the available resources that exist in rural areas. As the creators of these tourist products are travel agencies, tourist bureaus of local character or direct service providers and manufacturers of concrete products of certain industries in the context of rural tourism. Diversification of different tourist products on the market provides tourists with possibilities to choose the most suitable offer for them. Ordered tourist arrangements contain specific range of elements depending on the findings and assessments of the creator of the product about the tourist's preferences. These tourist arrangements are prepared in cooperation with their customers at previous consultations. It is a package of services and products to the requirements of their users. Depending on the available options, the organizer of tourist package incorporates services that users request. If the organizer is not able to meet all the requirements, he/she should inform the customer about the problems. The preparation of the arrangement, as a tourist product on demand may begin if the previous user of the services agreed with what he/she was looking for or as a possible alternative, which is similar and close to its wishes. This type of tourist product mostly has higher price than the announced. This stems from the fact that it may be that there are specific services that are rarely incorporated as contents' element of ordered product.

Among the characteristics of tourist arrangement, there is the dynamism in time and spatial terms. The product can be implemented in a longer or shorter period of time, at one site or more localities. Based on the dynamics of its performance we can define out specific types of tourism products. By the implementation of this criterion, the following types of differentiated types of services and products can be as residential and active.

Residential arrangements as tourism products include a combination of goods and services of specific products that enable satisfaction of tourist needs in a particular place and at a particular time. In rural tourism, villages as rural type settlements are destinations where activities take place, and where accommodation for tourists is provided. Considering that the residence arrangements last for several days, it means inclusion of more diverse content of activities, goods and services that are available in the rural settlements. They are related to activities whose resources are located either in the place of tourists' stay or in its immediate vicinity. Because of the longer duration of the stay, there is an opportunity for

possible correction of the price of these products, as accommodation facilities are occupied for longer period.

Active travel arrangements, as well as products, are combination of services, goods and specific products located in multiple locations often out of rural areas. The length of use of the services in one place is relatively short. The dynamism of the tourist product is that it contains different services that are carried out from location to location. This mostly means that the itinerary is quite extensive, because it includes a variety of attractions. Time periods are numerous, and they follow different visits within the route of movement. These arrangements are often called tours, and therefore they express the dominance of the content, attractions and services in the course of the journey. Because of this, very essential element is the selection of experienced and appropriate transportation and tour guide, because it should enable the optimal access to destination and appropriate presentation and explanation by tour guides when visiting all the places that are included within the itinerary.

The price of services for these products is relatively higher compared to stationary, which stems from a short stay in one place and time to adequately engagement capacity, goods and services. In tourism theory and practice (Marinoski, 2002), the other criteria for differentiation of tourist packages is according to the number of consumers of these products, which can be distinguished as individual or group visits, that on the other side, can vary as residential or active.

Excursions, as a tourist product in rural areas, are most common form of the product in the tourist offer of rural tourism. They take place for a relatively short period of time in attractive locations of the rural areas. Usually, an excursion is organized for a period of one day, which means that it does not include services for overnight. Different activities and services are related to traditional and authentic food preparation and consumption, visits to characteristic places, natural attractions or cultural heritage. These tourist products can occur in two forms: as specific tourist product and as part of another tourist product.

As specific tourist product, excursions differ according to the content of activities, locations where they are realized, and theme that may be with recreational and cultural character. The content of natural ambient and recreational values enables leisure, recreation, relaxation and socializing of the excursionists. These tourist products are related to elements that are associated with the attractions of destinations. In most of the excursions

programs, their organization is in open areas, because of which they depend on weather conditions. Clear and sunny weather are the most suitable conditions, and accommodation facilities are not important as are catering facilities. Also, the excursion can be based on the themed visit of cultural and historical tourist values. Organization of excursions as part of another tourist product is primarily with animation characteristics, and its role is in enrichment of the content of the tourist travel arrangements. Such excursions are part of the tourist product content

The distinction of selective rural tourism products is the starting point for the creation of competitive tourist offer in rural areas. This approach enables the use of the potential of rural areas for tourism development by inclusion of natural and cultural values. It also creates the basis of development of different forms of rural tourism in rural areas that may differ from farm, agro-entertainment, recreational, life-practicing, educational, camping, cultural, event, religious, hunting, fishing, wine, gastronomic or eco tourist products.

Different comprehensive tourist products include the creation of relations that will allow selection in the realization of tourist activity. The selection applies to alternative possibilities that enable tourists to experience selective tourist products. The range of different selective forms of activities varies and they can include recreation, fun, creative activities, education, discovery, experience, adventures or selfness. But, taking into consideration the different range of activities that are included in tourist products as their elements, we may conclude that rural tourism mainly includes nature-based, cultural, and agro tourism activities. These three major groups of tourism activities include diversity of attractions in rural areas' tourism development.

Conclusion

Rural tourism is an important factor for the economic development in rural areas by diversification of economic and social impacts where rural tourism activities take place. Tourism perspectives of rural areas depend on the presence, abundance and attractiveness of natural and cultural values, rural life, as well as the environment of such areas. These components of tourist development enable comprehensiveness and quality of tourist activities. The comprehensiveness understands activation of all tourist potentials in rural areas by creation of competitive and selective tourist products.

The potential resources for the creation of tourist products in rural areas can be listed as follows: traditional villages and fairly undisturbed regions; rich heritage; hospitality of rural residents; sufficient number of protected natural areas; traditional agricultural products and hand crafts; high quality of natural attractions (lakes, mountains, etc.); geographical diversity of culture, traditions, manifestations, rural features; relatively small number of residents in most rural areas as a solid basis for recreation in rural regions; presence of protected areas; authentic / traditional agricultural products and handicrafts; geographical diversity of culture, customs, traditional events; acceptable prices for rural goods and catering services. Diversity of tourist products leads to an increased competitiveness of rural areas and their differentiation that depends of the content of the elements of products as are the goods or services.

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