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TOURISM IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Spa Tourism in Serbia and Experiences of Other Countries



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



RURAL TOURISM IN THE FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS - THE CASE OF MUNICIPALITY OF LAKTAŠI

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Abstract

The paper deals with problems of rural development and its importance for rural areas. The aim of research was to, starting from general statements about role and significance of rural development, on the case of one municipality (the Municipality of Laktaši) determine what conditions and possibilities it has for development of rural tourism. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources and analyzed by a combination of several scientific research methods (analyses, synthesis, household survey, SWOT analyse, comparison). By mapping natural and atrophogenic resources in the municipality it was found that it has a lot of attractions that can bring tourists to rural areas and keep them from several hours to several days (natural beauty, archaeological sites, religious buildings, hunting, fishing, thermal water, autochthonous products, handicrafts, etc.). Despite that, the number of providers and beneficiaries of rural tourism services are limited. The conclusion is that conditions and opportunities for rural tourism in Laktaši are above the current scope of their valorisation. Sample survey of 95 rural households has confirmed that 2/3 of rural households have an idea what rural tourism means, and 1/5 (19%) of them would like to deal with rural tourism. These households have a surplus of accommodation capacities and unemployed labour force which could be engaged to provide rural tourism services.

Keywords: *Municipality of Laktaši, development, tourism, rural tourism.*

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Introduction

Rural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina are facing new challenges. One is how to keep rural population, especially members of the younger generations, who are getting educated, mainly for non-agricultural professions, and look for their perspective in urban areas. The second is low or no profitability of agricultural production, especially after introduction of the principle of free trade. The third is the conflict between need of giving increased attention to the environment protection and further intensification of agricultural production as a source of its efficiency. For all these challenges one of the solutions is rural tourism as a primary or complementary activity that will address one part of the rural population. In addition to the conditions and motivations of rural population for dealing with rural tourism it is necessary to simultaneously entertain and educate the local urban population to spent part of their free time and income consuming those services. One of the locations that have conditions for development of rural tourism, from both points of view, supply and demand, certainly is the area of Municipality of Laktaši in the northwest part of the Republic of Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The concept and importance of rural tourism

Rural tourism is interpreted in different ways, there is no universally accepted definition of rural tourism and for the same term different names are often used: rural tourism, village tourism, agrotourism. The definition of rural tourism varies from country to country depending of national legislation. According to the definition of the Council of Europe, rural tourism can be defined as "tourism in rural areas with all the activities that take place in them" (Ljutić, 2013). The most significant characteristics of rural tourism are that there are very quiet surroundings, absence of noise, the natural environment, communication with local residents, homemade food, learning about working habits of farmers. OECD (1994) briefly defined rural tourism as "tourism which takes place in the countryside" and bit wider as "complex multi-faceted activity: it is not just farm-based tourism. It includes farm-based holidays but also comprises special interest nature holidays and ecotourism, walking, climbing and riding holidays, adventure, sport and health tourism, hunting and angling, educational travel, arts and heritage tourism, and, in some areas, ethnic tourism". According to Aref and Gill (2009) "any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well

as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locals for a more enriching tourism experience can be termed as rural tourism".

Lane (1994) lists the following characteristic of rural tourism: located in rural areas; functionally rural – built upon the rural world's special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, "traditional" societies and "traditional" practices; rural in scale – both in terms of buildings and settlements – and, therefore, usually small scale; traditional in character, growing slowly and organically, and connected with local families.

The term of rural tourism itself is linked with rural space, so that the geographical area in which that type of tourism is manifested depends on the definition of rural areas. Generally, rural tourism is going on in rural areas. A large number of experts agree about the fact that rural tourism is significant for rural areas, because it ensures them economic growth and development, making extra cash income, adding value to agricultural products, employment (Keane, 2004; Birovljev and Štavljanin, 2011; Dahsper, 2014). Cvijanović and Vukovic (2014) noticed "that rural tourism is often associated with other forms of tourism that have a dominant impact on tourist visits to the certain destinations (winter resorts, spa canterers, etc.)".

Micro-economic approach to the study of the importance and place of rural tourism in local development, among others, have been researched and written about it by Arion et al. (2011) on the example of Tarnava Mare Area in Romania; Garau (2015) on the example of Marmilla in Sardinia, Italy; Vidić (2003) on the example of Valjevo region, Babić (2007) on the example of Petrovac na Mlavi, and Ilić (2007) on the example of Municipality of Kosijerac in Serbia; Čejvanović and Đurić (2011) on the example of Brčko Distrikt, and Gemaljević and Račić (2010) on the example of Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Babić (2010) on the example of Orahovica in Croatia.

Rural tourism, in particular on the rural households, has a great development potential, and it is at the very beginning in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When studying rural tourism, special attention should be paid to the interdependences and connections of rural tourism and agriculture because rural tourism is one of proven ways to add value to agricultural products and facilitate their easier marketing.

Tourism is a direct consumer of agricultural products and thereby in practice encourages development of agricultural production. On the other side primary role of agriculture is to secure enough food, necessary for satisfying nutritional needs of not only local population but also tourists (Mirjanić et al., 2011).

Material and Method

During the study the conditions and possibilities for the development of rural tourism for the case study one of the municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Municipality of Laktaši was selected. Rural areas in the Municipality of Laktaši abound significant natural, human and other development resources, but still villages lagging behind the development in urban areas. It is logical that, in that case, the rural tourism is a potential driver of rural development, which can change the socio-economic picture of rural areas in that municipality.

In accordance with the defined subject of the research, the objectives were determined as follows: to explore possibilities for development of rural tourism in the Municipality of Laktaši; to point out problems of rural tourism development and to confirm that rural tourism is a good opportunity for diversification of income of the rural population. The first research hypothesis is: the rural population on the territory of Municipality of Laktaši has conditions and interest in rural tourism. In situation when only a small number of rural households in the Municipality of Laktaši currently provides rural tourism services, there is an important issue if there were more households with the conditions and wish to deal with such activities. Confirmation of this hypothesis was tested by surveying a sample of rural households and interpretation of its results.

The second research hypothesis is that the local community, entities and state authorities don't encourage enough the development of rural tourism. By analyzing the structure of the budgets of ministries in the Republic of Srpska responsible for the support of tourism and rural tourism and Municipality of Laktaši, it was examined whether there were planned and used funds to support rural tourism. The attitude about this hypothesis was obtained from a number of rural households that were the subject of the survey.

For the selecting and determining sample size, first, the available data about surface and population of settlements in the Municipality of

Laktraši were systematized, the average population density for each settlement and their classifying to urban and rural areas calculated, by applying OECD marginal criteria of population density. Villages with a population density of less than 150 inhabitants per km² were classified as rural area, and they consist a basic set (52.6% of the territory of the municipality, 20,467 inhabitants and 6,472 households) out of which surveyed households were selected. The sample size (n=95) was determined with a confidence level of 95%, and the sample included 1.47% units of the basic set. The sample was stratified and only rural households were represented. In the sample, households from all villages were selected, and their number in the sample was proportional to the number of households in each village which constitute the basic sample (quoted sample). Further selection of surveyed households in each village was carried out by random selection.

Results of research

The research results are presented through: overview of socio-economic characteristics of the analysed Municipality of Laktraši; review of the state of rural tourism in the same municipality; view of rural households attitudes toward rural tourism; presentation of incentives for development of rural tourism; SWOT analysis and review of possible directions for the rural tourism development.

Socio-economic characteristics of Municipality of Laktaši

Municipality of Laktaši is located in the northwest Bosnia and Herzegovina; administratively belong to the Republic of Srpska. The total area of the municipality is 391.4 km², and in the municipality, according to the census in 2014, lives 36,848 residents (RZS RS, 2013). The rural tourism is one of the priorities for the future development of the Municipality of Laktaši. The real basis for the development of rural tourism in the municipality is: nature, culture, people and geostrategic position.

When it comes to traffic infrastructure, we can say that the municipality has a solid traffic network. All main, regional and local roads are asphalted along their entire length. Thanks to the favourable geostrategic position and existing traffic infrastructure, Municipality of Laktaši is well connected with neighbouring municipalities and wider surroundings.

for the preservation of nature, and thus the rational and responsible use of natural resources. Therefore, the focus gradually shifted from utilization of natural resources for intensive agricultural production to the utilization for any other activities which create alternative income, including agro and rural tourism.

The Municipality of Laktaši has a good transport infrastructure and links with other cities and regions, which their commitment to tourists visiting the municipality, it has a favourable climate and natural diversity that is good motive to attract tourists to come and engage in various recreational activities designed (walking, running, cycling, etc.), there are springs of mineral water (spas), some of which are located in rural areas. Tourists who visit spas can be accommodated in the facilities of health centres, but also in the houses of rural households around spas in neighbourhood. Also, reach in cultural and historical monuments, which are mainly in the rural areas of the municipality, and they are reason for tourists to come and look them.

In addition to the variety of natural resources, the Municipality of Laktaši has interesting archaeological sites from the Palaeolithic, Roman and Byzantine periods, which are located mainly in rural parts of municipality, which may be interesting to tourists. There are also religious buildings, among them there is the wooden church in Blaško from the XVII century. During the year there are number of cultural events in both urban and rural areas in the municipality such as: Laktaši's summer, Days of Slovenians, Strawberry days, Days of wine tasting, Days of grain and Days of maize fields. In order to promote and improve tourism offer in 2004, the Tourist organization of Municipality of Laktaši was established. Overall, in the Municipality of Laktaši there are natural, historical, infrastructural, anthropogenic, manifestations and other preconditions for rural tourism, which were previously described in this chapter. However, rural tourism is underdeveloped and for provision of rural tourism services, only three rural households are formally registered.

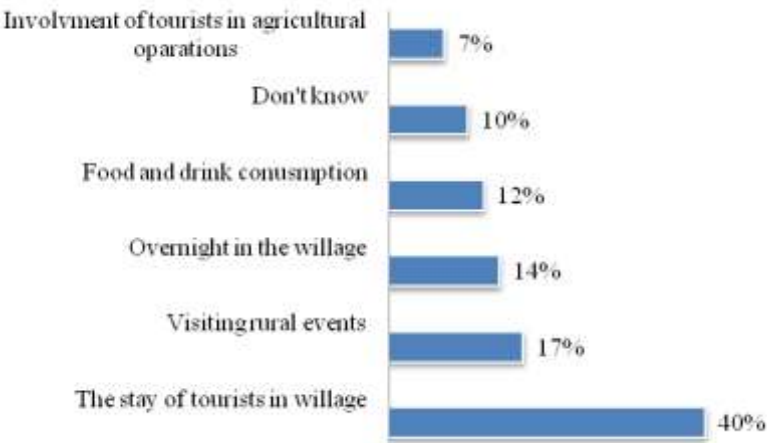
The attitudes of rural households toward rural tourism

In the year of 2014, the number of 95 respondents were surveyed, 47 men and 48 women, members of rural families, of different age, selected proportionally from all rural areas of the municipality of Laktaši. The main share of the respondents were in age group between 30 and 45 (30%), followed by those in age group over 60 years (29%). When it

comes to level of education, most respondents had the secondary education (47%), followed by primary school (24%), and the lowest number was persons with a university education (29%). More than two thirds of surveyed households were involved in some kind of agriculture production, 29% were engaged in some of a non-agricultural activity. Below, there are some of the results based on processing the survey data.

On the survey question - are you familiar with a term of rural tourism, 76% answered yes, while 24% said no. This answer indicates that 3/4 residents of rural areas in the municipality have heard about rural tourism, which make them easier for afterwards trainings in this topic and thinking themselves to start dealing with some aspect of this type of tourism. Being asked what rural tourism means to them, results were shown in the following chart.

Chart 1: *The meaning of rural tourism for rural population*



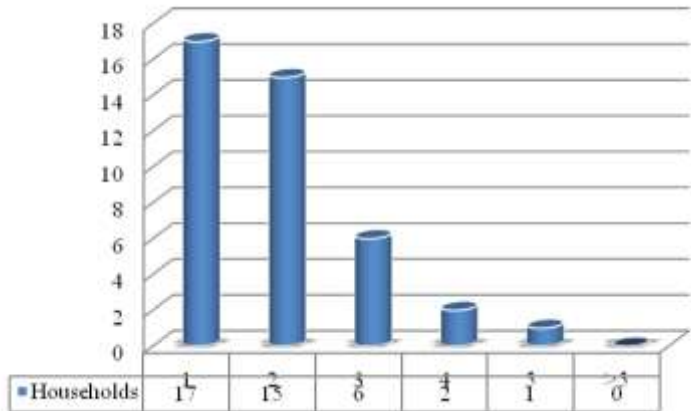
Source: *Data processing by authors based on data from the survey.*

It is encouraging that there is a small number of those who don't have their own perception of the meaning of rural tourism, and and most of them properly identified rural tourism with some of the forms of rural tourism.

Out of the total 95 surveyed households, 18 confirmed that their household wanted to deal with rural tourism in the future. Starting with the assumption of representativeness of the sample for the whole rural area of the municipality, it came out that 19% of total rural households wanted to deal with rural tourism, and in relation to the total number of

rural households it could be even 1,226 households. Slightly less than half of the surveyed households (43%) has a surplus of rooms, indicating a significant potential for provision of accommodation, without the need of major investment in fulfilment the initial conditions.

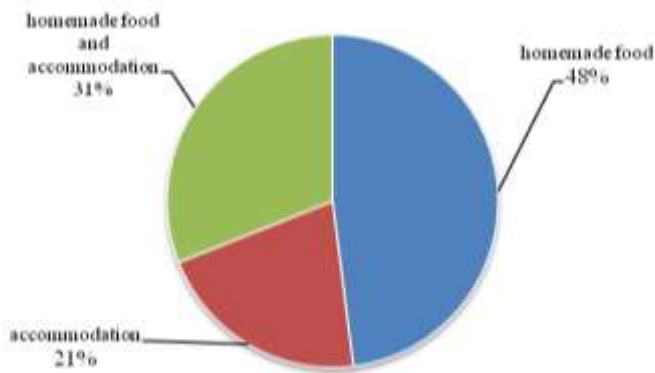
Chart 2: *Number of free rooms*



Source: *Data processing by authors based on data from the survey.*

A third of rural households interested in providing tourist services is ready to offer full service of accommodation and food (full or half board), one half of them is ready to offer less demanding type, i.e. accommodation only, and 21% food only, which is most suitable to daily visitors from surrounding cities, and with good promotion, to transient tourists who need short breaks on longer journeys.

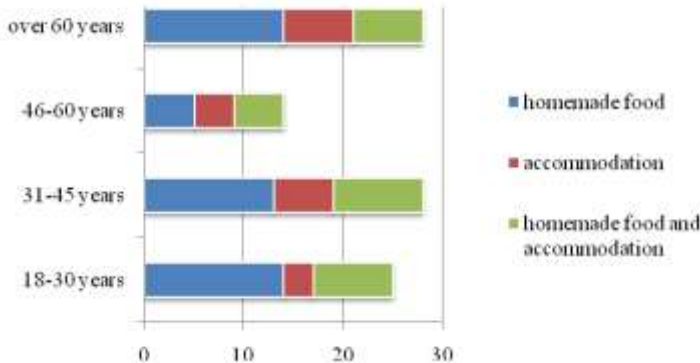
Chart 3: *Preferences for certain types of rural tourism*



Source: *Data processing by authors based on data from the survey.*

There are participants of different age categories among the total number of surveyed who are willing to offer some types of tourist products on their households, as seen on the graph 4. The lowest interest in the rural tourism services was shown by people aged between 46 and 60 years. The largest interest for additional income from tourism services is shown by older than 60 years.

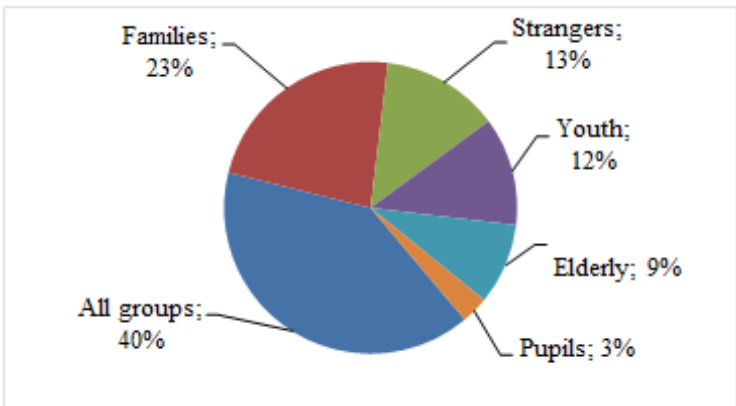
Chart 4: *Preferences for certain types of rural tourism by age group*



Source: *Data processing by authors based on data from the survey.*

The largest number of households responded that they would, if they got engaged in rural tourism, their tourist products would be directed toward all target groups (40%), i.e. 23% to families, 13% to foreigners, 12% to youth, 9% to elderly and 3% to pupils, which is shown in the chart 5.

Chart 5: *Segmentation of users of rural tourism services*



Source: *Data processing by authors based on data from the survey.*

Incentives for development of rural tourism

Ministry of agriculture, forestry and water management of the Republic of Srpska within its measures for support of rural development encourages the development of tourism activities in the rural areas. This type of incentives is implemented in the framework of rural development policy. In the period 2010-12 some funds were allocated for that purpose, and afterwards, due to reduced agricultural budget, those allocations stopped. Having in mind that in the period of five years the amount of EUR 200,000 was allocated for entire Republic of Srpska for rural tourism (out of which Municipality of Laktaši did not withdraw any amount), the conclusion is that these funds are insufficient for any serious promotion and development of this type of tourism.

Table 1: *Financial support to the development of rural tourism (in EUR)*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Ministry of agriculture, forestry and water management of the Republic of Srpska						
Total RS	87,099	94,720	19,043	0	0	200,862
Ministry of trade and tourism of the Republic of Srpska						
Support to programs for tourism development - total RS	n/a	n/a	2,586,062	1,455,223	1,185,165	5,226,451
Support to programs for rural tourism development - total RS	n/a	n/a	36,730	31,368	0	68.098

Source: *Data processing by authors based on data obtained on request from the aforementioned institutions.*

Ministry of trade and tourism of the Republic of Srpska was something more generous in terms of incentives for the development of tourism, which is understandable considering its mission and title, but the incentives for development of rural tourism were a minor and at the level of three years, it amounted EUR 68,000 for entire the Republic of Srpska, out of which the Municipality of Laktraši used EUR 5,000.

In the period from 2012 to 2014, a total of EUR 42,000 was allocated in the budget of Municipality of Laktaši for organization of various cultural,

entertainment and other events and EUR 20,000 for other programme activities, which can be partly considered as a support to development of the rural tourism. In the same period there were no allocations directed only to rural tourism at municipal level.

Bringing together funding from three sources by which support to development of the rural tourism was financed in the period 2010-14 conclusion is that allocations for these purposes were inadequate. In one, in tourism and all other aspects, developed municipality, as it is the Municipality of Laktaši, for rural tourism development, less than 1 EUR per capita was allocated annually.

And according to the results of the sample survey data it was found that the local government doesn't provide enough assistance for the development of rural tourism because 88% of respondents stated their opinion that local authority doesn't provide any kind of support in dealing with rural tourism activities, while 12% of them consider that it provides some kind of support.

The majority of respondents (95%) believe that the tourist organization does not do enough to promote rural tourism, while only 5% said the opposite.

SWOT analysis of the situation and the possibilities of rural tourism development

The main competitive advantages of Municipality of Laktraši for rural tourism are: nature (relief, diverse climate, preserved environment) and human resources (education, motivation and hospitality). The main weaknesses for the rural development in the Municipality of Laktaši are:

- unfavourable economic and political situation (global and local);
- lack of vision and quality programmes for development of rural tourism and
- insufficient financial and organizational support.

Table 2: *SWOT analysis of the situation and possibilities of development of rural tourism in the Municipality of Laktaši*

Strengths	Weaknesses
protected natural environment; wide variety of natural resources; the reach cultural-historical heritage; hospitality; convenient geographical location; reliable traffic infrastructure; favourable climate; regular organized cultural, traditional and agricultural manifestations; spas (spa Slatina and spa Laktaši); rich flora and fauna; existence of municipal touristic organization; educated rural population.	lack of vision of tourism development at the local level; absence of quality programs for rural tourism development; lack of managerial knowledge and skills among providers of touristic services; limited organized offer of accommodation in villages; weak cooperation private and public sector; lack of standardisation and categorisation in tourism; modest promotional activities; insufficient touristic signalization; lack of education of employees in tourism.
Opportunities	Treats
space for development of new touristic products in a field of health, sport and rural tourism; more comprehensive valuation cultural and historical values and organizing offers in the field of religious and event tourism; development of tourism in rural households; increasing demand for rural tourism; demand for autochthonous products; access to pre-accession EU funds.	long-term consequences of extreme natural disasters; economic crises and decreased purchase power of (local and foreign) tourists; bad political image of B&H as a touristic destination; insufficient financial and other support to development of tourism, especially rural tourism; increased interest of tourists for foreign and weak interest for domestic touristic destinations.

Possible directions for the provision of rural tourism

Rural tourism includes all tourist services, activities and types of tourism in the rural areas, which are dominated by natural environment, countryside, small settlements and villages, agriculture and forestry and agricultural holdings.

Visiting and exploring non degraded nature, and at the same time introducing the culture and tradition in the Municipality of Laktraši gives opportunity for exercising the following forms of rural tourism (which overlap and cross with some other forms of tourism):

- Tourism at rural households – rural households that give tourists the possibility of staying on farms and enjoy in nature;
- Fishing and hunting – Vrbas river and many of its tributaries: Bukovica,
- Klačnička rijeka, Turjanica, Vukešnica, Osorna etc. and slopes of the
- mountains of Crni Vrh and Kozara;
- Spa tourism – spas Slatina and Laktraši provide the possibilities of
- combining health services in premises of health centres and household
- accommodation;
- Cultural and historical tourism – archaeological sites Zidine - Jelića gaj,
- Brdašće - Laktaši, Gradina - Šušnjari, Kamena kugla in Slatina, Early
- Byzantine Lost City „Balkis“ from IV century;
- Religious tourism – wooden Church Malo Blaško, Church of Virgin Mary
- in Maglajani, Italian Parish Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Mahovljani,
- Ukrainian Church in Devetina, the Temple of the Holy Virgin and others;
- Events and manifestations in rural areas – Strawberry days, "Laktaši's summer", Days of grain and Days of maize fields, etc.;
- Mountain tourism – mountain slopes of Crni vrh and Kozara which abound in fresh and clean air, where visitors can enjoy and stay in summer and in the winter;
- Recreation – cycling, hiking, running or camping in nature.

Conclusion

The Municipality of Laktraši has very favourable conditions for rural tourism development, in terms of preserved nature, biodiversity, favourable climate and topography.

The rural tourism represents potential for development of rural areas in Municipality of Laktraši in a manner that it is economically, ecologically and socially acceptable or sustainable. Sustainable rural development contributes to poverty reduction, rational use of natural resources,

reducing the depopulation of rural areas and contributes to improving the quality of life of the rural population in these areas.

By analyzing secondary data sources and collecting opinions of rural household representatives, we come to conclusion that rural population on the territory of Municipality of Laktaši has conditions and interest to be involved in the rural tourism activities.

In the past period the local, entities and state authorities haven't stimulated the development of rural tourism enough by assigning financial and other incentives.

The importance of the rural tourism for the development of the rural areas in Municipality of Laktaši is reflected in: temporary or permanent employment of the members of rural households; increasing the incomes of rural households from this activity; valorisation of rural areas and values through their inclusion in the tourist offer; development of undeveloped areas, remote from urban part of the municipality; placement of surplus of local products (meat, milk, fruit, vegetable and other non processed or processed agricultural products) from rural households to tourists; placement of handicraft products (embroidery, the crochet, knitting...), and consequently return of old forgotten crafts and preservation of tradition; creating opportunities for the return of population to the abandoned rural farms and their revitalization.

In order to use the existing potentials for the development of rural tourism in the Municipality of Laktaši, it is necessary:

- To carry out the identification of households of those interested to engage in rural tourism activity.
- To organize trainings, both for the holders of tourist activities (representatives of local authorities, tourism and non-governmental organizations) as well as for providers of the rural tourist services.
- Special attention should be paid to the training of women in rural communities, as they are in greater extent the potential leaders of the development of rural tourism at the rural households (for example: food preparation or making crafts and other homemade products) and are more often unemployed members of the family who have free time for additional work.
- To do categorisation of facilities for rural tourism, establish s databases and to register households that offers those services.

- To perform an adequate promotion of rural tourism services, single (web) and a common, through the local tourism organization, participating on the fairs, presenting in electronic media and alike.
- To organize offer of related services of rural tourism, with the assistance of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and to respond to the demand of the modern tourist market in an adequate way (e.g. a special offer for hunters, cyclists, beneficiaries of spa services, accommodation for group visits, etc.).
- To provide financial support for rural households that wish to be engaged in providing services of rural tourism, as well as for the building and improving joint tourist infrastructure and for the promotional activities.

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