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

Spa Tourism in Serbia and Experiences of Other Countries



**THEMATIC
PROCEEDINGS**

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



ENTERPRENEURIAL IDEA AS A CHANCE FOR RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The main purpose of this work is the analysis of tourism development in the rural area regarding the role of entrepreneurship which should contribute to the development of this important and perspective economic sector. Global economy and crisis in the area of agriculture which covered developed and undeveloped parts of the world lead to lacking rural economies. As forced to search for other revenue sources, people from rural areas think of the introduction of tourist offers in their short term and long term plans. As an additional part of this line of thought, there is a fact that the focus of tourist demand has significantly changed during last several years – due to overall and increasingly dangerous global warming of “sea and the sun” areas and searching for destinations which are more healthy and clean for life, vacation and relaxation. It is concluded that resources for the development of rural tourism can be maintained if entrepreneurship as a flexible model is included into the entire process. The flexible model can endure every kind of crisis.

Keywords: *tourism, rural tourism, entrepreneurship spirit, training, partnership*

Introduction

The Republic of Serbia is located on a crossing point under the influence of European integrations and strong effects of its market, institutions, enterprises, and individuals. There is a rapid development of growth strategies of different economic sectors while tourism is confirmed as an inevitable complex with almost unused potentials. It is obvious that tourism was never seriously considered by the development policy of Serbia. On the other hand, neighbouring countries such as Hungary,

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Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and many others have made great efforts to improve their position in the list of important tourism countries.

The topic of this paper will be only one specific form of tourism. This kind is probably the most challenging form of tourism – village tourism. Its possibilities are potentially high. Rural space includes 80% of European Union surface and 25% of total population. Rural population have increasingly adopted tourism as one of the strategies for sustainable development of local community. Sustainable development is very important for the increased development of this area for two main reasons. The first reason: these areas can become tourist destinations although it is not their traditional characteristic. The second reason: entrepreneurship activities can be developed on a local level, which can lead to their further progress.

Village tourism seems to be forgotten by many. Although this topic is often mentioned, the literature on this subject is negligible. It is mostly related to newer sources of information. However, meetings dedicated to village tourism are maintained. These meetings sporadically comprise the presentation of works on this subject, which is not enough. It is important to include the participation of tourism faculties so that they can convince the state to provide help on this subject. Also, interested people should be guided to the required information – those who have worked in the area of village tourism and those who could use its capacities.

Village tourism is not sustainable in this way. Higher interest (and help) of the state and experts from this area are needed. Village tourism can be maintained only as an additional village activity. However, village tourism cannot maintain itself! There is no need for competition with ultimate tourism countries. It is important to improve village tourism in a way that entrepreneur uses his/her idea for his/her own business (Pavlovic & Krstic, 2016).

If we want village tourism to be developed in the future, researches should motivate exploring this area and imply needed actions.

Where are we now?

Tourism offer in Serbia is rather poor. A total number of 87 000 tourist accommodation establishments capacity is very small amount compared to tourism countries such as France (81 million of tourists), Spain (60

million of tourists) or Croatia with 910 000 beds on offer (10 604 000 tourists, 57 million of overnight stays). Austria with the same population as Serbia receives 24 million of tourists a year (www.cenort.rs; Radonjić, 2011). Serbia receives 1.7 million of tourists a year and most of them go to Belgrade – 520 000 (Republički zavod za statistiku, 2016). Serbia is visited by 700 thousands of foreign tourists each year (www.tos.com, 2016). The concerning fact is that the number of tourists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Russia has increased unlike the number of tourists from Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia.

Things are moving backward regarding village tourism in Serbia. Village tourism was more developed thirty years ago. Natural conditions for the development of such form of tourism are more than favourable – nature is preserved, the climate is mild, air is clean, water is pure, there are many lakes and rivers and well-developed flora and fauna. There is no exact information on a number of guests since there are no precise records. There is information that cca. 400 000 overnight stays are recorded in this tourism sector, which is 6% of total overnight stays in Serbia. It is, also, worth mentioning that almost all tourists are from Serbia while a number of foreign tourists is negligible! There are 140 households including cca. 750 beds in 44 villages and 18 towns (www.tos.com, 2016).

According to these statistics, and the data in Austria, there are 15 500 farms (110 times more than in Serbia!) engaged in village tourism, the following question arises: is this too small a number?

There is no need for expert knowledge to conclude two important things. Firstly, Serbia does not provide offer good enough to attract a higher number of tourists. Secondly, people coming to Serbia for the first time rarely choose this country in the following years. Such decision is under the effect of many factors and details which do not attract enough attention. They will be mentioned later.

Importance of tourism

Term tourism originates from Greek word *tornos* and Latin word *tornare*. It denotes moving in the circle or around a central axis, which means that people who move on their journey come back to their starting point after they pass the circle. In other words – they move back to their home. People on the move are known as tourists and they go on their journeys for recreation, pleasure, vacation or for the sake of travel.

Tourism is a global social phenomenon which constantly changes, develops and includes stable growth. Turbulences come from environmental factors. Economic crisis as a follower of each economy, terrorism attacks rapidly change tourists wish to move to certain destinations. Furthermore, the great problem are increased migrations and wars all over the world. Due to these facts, some destinations are avoided by tourists. That could be the great opportunity for development of Serbian village tourism!

During the last several years, tourism has increasingly grown and become the key trigger of social-economic development. In addition to this, tourism is evolving to become one of the highly developed economic branches in the world. Modern tourism is narrowly connected to development (www.tos.com).

Nowadays, business scope in tourism is equal to an export of oil, food and cars production. Therefore, tourism is becoming one of the most important participants in international trade and a primary source of revenues for developing countries. Thus, competition among destinations is becoming more serious.

The contribution of tourism to economic welfare depends on a quality of tourism offer. All countries that consider obtaining their part of gain should participate in the development of tourist offers.

What is village tourism?

There are many divisions for tourism. This paper focuses on specific forms which include appropriate tourist motives that will attract visitors (tourists) to interesting destinations. Specific forms of tourism are oriented to parts of total tourism demand and they are developed contrary to mass tourism. There are the following forms: cultural tourism, ecologic tourism, urban (city) tourism, congress tourism, health tourism, hunting and fishing tourism, gastronomic tourism, educational tourism, sporting events tourism, etc. The most interesting form for the purpose of this paper is village (rural) tourism.

Village tourism is a specific form of tourism whose idea is to turn people back to nature. The definition of village tourism is not completely adopted yet but this is not a problem for its development. Terms such as rural and agro-tourism are also in use.

Rural tourism is the widest term and it should include each tourism activity within the certain rural area. It usually includes hunting and fishing tourism, village tourism, ecologic tourism and cultural tourism (Todorovic & Stetic, 2009).

Agrotourism is narrower term than rural tourism and it includes village tourism, events related to a village and its environment: village crafts, folklore, gastronom (www.turizamiputovanja.com).

Finally, there is village tourism at household in a village where complete tourism offer is provided within the household. Therefore, food is prepared in the household while accommodation rooms are usually placed in rooms that household members do not use. Within this kind of tourism in Serbia, special houses for guests are rarely built (www.seoskiturizam.hr).

It can be concluded that village tourism is an activity of registered village households whose main activity is agriculture. Certain village households have tried to register as entrepreneurs but they have given up such intention due to high taxes and frequent inspection controls. A woman engaged in village tourism for more than 25 years claimed that inspections had been almost daily during her entrepreneurship work.

The most important topics on village tourism

Village tourism includes many actual topics: products of village tourism, market, village tourism and local development, environmental protection, national help for village tourism, training important for village tourism, opening of new workplaces, future of village tourism and cooperation with partners in order to promote village tourism.

World tourism organization UNWTO (UN agency) that contributed to the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism offered optimistic evaluations on a scope of tourism demand. Regarding main tendencies in tourism demand, it is obvious that rural tourism is important owing to (www.unwto.org, 2016):

- Refreshments by contrast village-city, lowlands-mountains, sea-continental water;
- Intention to experience culture-historical legacy and preserved nature (so-called soft or new tourism related to village, and it includes clean

water, healthy food, clean air. In other words, tourism focuses on natural environment);

- Need for places, events, and experiences with identity, integrity, and differences;
- The wish of people to participate in numerous village activities (sport, hunting, and fishing, gastronomy, life in nature, handworks, field forks, events, fairs, etc.).

Also, within the document Strategy for the development of tourism in Serbia, part “Strategic advantages”, article 4 – strategic potentials for success in tourism are defined through untouched mountains, forests, agar areas, vineyards and hunting-fishing zones whose pictures present a recognizable image of unique landscape enriched with contrasts (Strategija razvoja turizma Republike Srbije, 2006).

Agriculture and tourism

Traditionally, village life relies on agriculture as a main source of revenues. However, during the last several decades, the central role of agriculture has been significantly lowered due to many reasons. One of the most important reasons is the decrease of village population and a migration of young people from villages to cities. It has inducted complete change in the way of life at the village and production of agricultural products. Need for food production remained, but due to modern technology and mechanization, less personal staff/workforce is involved in these processes.

The reason for leaving villages is the search for easier and more comfortable life. The village has always been a synonym for hard and rough life. In the sense of economy, a farmer is not able to live and improve only via agriculture any more. The farmer has to work additional jobs to provide additional assets. All of this has lead to village tourism as an activity which, if it is well organized, can provide better living conditions for agriculture household. However, a farmer mostly invests money earned from tourism into agricultural production proving that village tourism is considered as an additional activity (Vujicic et al., 2008).

What is needed to achieve success?

One of the most important things is connecting with the state through correct partnership. The state should help village tourism in all ways so planned revenues can be provided. Nowadays, this is not the case since village tourism is on its own. Besides initiating and developing investments, the state should be involved in all parts – planning, strategic directions development, training and other factors for improvement of this sector. Other economic subject should be also included in this process.

Village tourism could synchronize with them and enrich its offer. It is mainly related to participation of organizations whose activities are culture, sport, education, food production, tourism organizations, agencies, operators, etc.

Expectations of village tourism

Are expectations of village tourism too high? Should it have faster development? Reasons for a slower development of village tourism will be discussed.

Villages are usually far from cities and the road infrastructure in this relation is rather bad. Mostly, there are no regular bus lines, railway or any other kind of organized transport of passengers. Tourism is not possible with bad transport conditions for people and goods. Also, problems for villages are water supply network and sewerage system. There is a small number of villages (except those near cities) with problems of this kind solved. Water providing is not a cheap investment. The same situation is with sewerage system which is based on septic tanks for wastewater. These underground tanks are usually located near houses.

Accommodation capacities are important for the development of village system. However, existing capacities are not sufficient. If there are one or two spare beds, no one will start with village tourism activity. It means that it is important to rebuild, repair or build new objects. Farmers do not have enough money for these actions whereas the state is not open for help in investments. During meetings with certain farmers, it has been concluded that they mostly had to take loans for many years to repay money for investments in rebuilding or building accommodation establishments.

Development of this economic sector is also hindered by a lack of information on village tourism. The scope of this problem is confirmed by the data that people who work in the area of village tourism during ten years do not have reliable information on maintaining organized village tourism. State institutions in this economic sector are mostly responsible for such a situation since they should maintain this sector. According to the websites of Ministry of Agriculture or Ministry of Tourism, there is a limited number of useful information which could be helpful to people interested in working in this area.

Furthermore, there is a lack of connection between people who work in village tourism and other entrepreneurs. Everyone who tried to develop tourist offer on his own did not achieve a success. Results would be much better if more households were connected. Also, it would be good to connect with organizations which could make the additional content of tourism offer. Serbia has many spa centers with minimal conditions for their existence. Foreigners who visit Serbia always ask why people in Serbia do not combine spa and village tourism which is absolutely popular in the world. There are sport, cultural and other organizations which would enrich and expand the offer of village tourism.

What would happen if all of these conditions were fulfilled?

The town nearby includes a hotel with accommodation capacities but without guests. The village is 10 kilometers away and it takes a car ride of 10 minutes to arrive at the town. The village includes an offer of breakfast, lunch and dinner. An agricultural household provides many activities at the countryside including excursions to historical and cultural centers in the region. Also, there are available sports fields. Coaches with planned schedule for guests can be engaged. Also, guests can be included in field work or in work at one of handcraft workshops in the village.

Visits to producers of brandy, wine, juices, fruit and vegetable products can also be organized. Nowadays, each village in Serbia has its own winery. Each village has several tanks for brandy production. It can be a great chance for an attraction of domestic and foreign tourists.

Is there a development of village tourism?

There are two questions which should be correlated although they are not. The first question: is there a development of village tourism – are there

increases in its capacities? The second question: are there growths in the demand for village tourism destinations?

Demands for village tourism destinations have been increasing each year. It is shown by the results of tourism researchers (I evropski kongres o seoskom turizmu, 2003). There are many factors which have an effect on such a situation. The first factor is education. Researches showed that education is in correlation with increased interest in village tourism. Reasons for that are following:

- People want to use clean, fresh village air. Also, they want to have healthy nutrition using food without chemicals and additives. People want to consume clean water, to taste wine and brandy produced in natural way without sugar and other additives;
- People want to be informed about village life. Many of them originate from village regions, their parents or other relatives lived in the village, so they want to get familiar with this way of life;
- Guests would like to learn something about culture, old crafts, folklore;
- There was an interesting suggestion by Branislav Bajagic. He suggested to foreign tourists to “rent” a piece of land which they could maintain themselves and provide their own products (Bajagic, 2016).

There are many ideas and suggestions. The question is how to realize them. However, there are solutions at the beginning. Other issues need search for the best option in order to start village tourism. Above all, it is important to make constant pressure on state authorities and all tourism institutions. It is important to develop an awareness that village tourism is the future for this region where a small number of people work in agriculture although it provides sufficient incomes. It is also important to provide a better way of life at the village for young people. There has always been statements that someone (state) should provide conditions for young people to stay in the villages. Maybe the story has to be reversed – young people should take the initiative and solve problems for themselves rather than wait for the help from the state.

The increased amount of leisure time and more money provide opportunities for people to travel and see new destinations. Village tourism is still more available than other forms of tourism especially for people with lower incomes.

Bad traffic connections as a problem are related to each form of tourism. Well developed streets and small distance between villages and cities can be a positive factor for the development of village tourism.

Definitely, all people take care of their health which can be directly connected to village tourism. Clean nature, unpolluted food and water and peaceful life at the village have healing effects on people, especially those who are often faced with stress. Practitioners recommend taking exercises as a part of treatment and rehabilitation. Village tourism is perfect for that – walks in nature, bicycle riding, horses riding, field work.

People from cities who visit villages mostly see some natural materials for the first time. These materials are used for the production of furniture, sheets, clothes, etc. Most of the people visiting the village for the first time learn that honey can be tasted only with a wooden spoon and that meat can be dried naturally without the use of power and chemical preparations. Therapeutic particles – plants – can be seen everywhere in the village.

A psychologist claimed that green color has positive effects on behavior. The green color is a marking sign of village and village tourism. All people should do is to enjoy natural colours in order to relax and forget daily concerns and problems.

A village is an authentic form. Villages are very different from each other and none of them can be copied. There were attempts to provide an impression of a village in cities via parks and zoos. However, it is hard to eliminate noise, crowd and everything related to urban conditions. On the other hand, a village provides peace and relaxation.

As for activities in village tourism, it is worth mentioning that guests can plan and organize activities following their hosts' advices. Other forms of tourism do not provide such a possibility.

Its seasonal character is one of the obstacles to the development of tourism. Village tourism in Serbia is popular from the second half of May until half of September. This situation could be significantly changed by attracting tourists who are retired and who can use their holidays separately during one year.

Tourismologist Branislav Bajagic presented advantages of village tourism in Serbia in an interesting way. He claimed that it is healthier to eat homemade cheese than hamburger and to drink fresh natural water than “Coca-Cola”. He also claimed the following: “Geographic position, terrain of Serbia, mountains, hills, lawns, meadows, forests, orchards, springs, streams, rivers, lakes, domestic and wild animals, clean air, clean water, clean food, peace, relaxations, history, culture-historical monuments, folklore, old handcrafts, hospitable people, etc. are elements which can be used for the development of extraordinary tourist offer very popular in the world.” (Bajagic, 2016).

However, increased demand and good perspective are not followed by the development of village tourism capacities. The obtained data confirm that village tourism was more developed during the last decade of the twentieth century. It is important to provide further research on causes which led to a lack of interest of state authorities in this economic sector.

What tourism can provide to rural development?

- Financial incomes. As it was concluded on seminar in Belgrade “Village tourism in Europe: experiences and perspectives” in 2002, the first conclusion is that village tourism opens possibilities for incomes development (www.cenrot.rs, 2016);
- Maintaining jobs is very important for the rural region. Beside employment in village tourism, it is important to maintain sustainable development and organization in the region (retail, transport, catering, medical care);
- Opening new workplaces which will directly influence people to stay in villages;
- Multiple kinds of jobs which can provide better incomes and presence (functioning) of young people at the village. Apart from agriculture, agricultural households can be engaged in tourism, catering and old handcrafts. All of this improves rural development and provides certain incomes;
- Employment of women and women from households. Most of the village tourism destinations in Europe and Serbia are organized by women, which is not surprising. Traditionally, women play an important role in village households as the ones who manage all household jobs. Men usually work in the field while women take care of household;

- Development of old and forgotten handicrafts;
- Preservation and environmental protection. It is important to improve living conditions by building road networks, introduction of traffic and transport lines, water supply and sewerage system and the development of other infrastructure projects;
- The quality of living. Lower migration of young people from villages would influence the quality of life in rural areas. The important factor is taking over the business from parents which ensures working position for the future;
- Increasing of cultural awareness, preservation and reminding of traditional values (Pavlovic, 2013). Village tourism indirectly influences the preservation of traditional moral values. This model acknowledged honesty, help by neighbours and good relationships;
- Job satisfaction (Pavlovic, 2014);
- The shift to a market economy. It is a paradox that people should release themselves from state rules and develop their business according to marketplace laws. On the other hand, it is very difficult to maintain business and competitiveness with tourism offer without help of the state;
- Village tourism can be developed with much lower investments rather than investments in other economic activities (Petric, 2006);
- However, village tourism can develop new ideas and initiatives which will encourage new projects feasible for the rural environment (www.selo.rs, 2016).

Problems, obstacles and threats to village tourism

- The threat to ecology. Villages are natural and ecological clean environments. However, villages without developed and solved infrastructure can jeopardize eco-system;
- Social-cultural threat. Since cities have changed their socio-cultural environment after migrations from villages to cities, the same change can appear for villages. It can lead to a change of traditional village community. Such process is already happening and it can be accelerated by developing micro tourism environments in the village (Pavlovic, 2013);
- There are several so-called weekend-resorts located in the village without any connections with village tourism;
- Need for building and expanding of objects which can change authenticity of village architecture;

- One of the problems is related to the rental of household fields by entrepreneurs who do not live in such environment. Such people are not sensitive to local tradition, culture and specific problems of the local community. They can use their suppliers, markets and leave business and move to another place in case of minor business problems;
- Transformation of village environment into an urban environment with well-known issues related to traffic. Narrow and difficult roads can lead to destroying existing road infrastructure and traffic accidents;
- Increasingly difficult effects of local community to life in rural resort;
- Village tourism is not affordable for all rural resorts. The market should be investigated in order to determine if such activity is productive and favourable for a certain environment.

Training as an important factor for the village tourism development

One of the main problems in the development of village tourism is a need for education and training (International Conference in Riga, 2004). It is often foreseen since complexity and professionalism of tourism business is not the main issue among people. Success in village tourism will not be possible without professionals. It can be shown by an example of village tourism in Slovenia. It is important to provide the special certificate for tourism business. Education for this work is, at least, graduated high school and courses in cooking, catering, hotel management, etc. Also, it is important to pass programs related to hygiene and health. However, people in Serbia mostly rely on intuition, inherited knowledge and unverified stories rather than knowledge.

According to the opinion of people who want to start a business in village tourism, it can be concluded that they consider training as not important for business. It is a big mistake since training is a precondition for the development of efficiency and profitability. Training should facilitate the communication between tourism entrepreneurs and state and among tourism agencies. On the other hand, it is very difficult to imagine programs that would make views wider, increase business standards and influence the creation of professional attitudes. Training should improve the following (Pavlovic, 2015):

- Main knowledge related to tourism and trends in tourism and especially trends in village tourism. People from village tourism

should be updated with tourism events in region and all over the world in order to make right time reactions;

- Principles of sustainable tourism;
- Skills related to tourists attraction (advertising and marketing);
- Main business skills and management skills. People in Slovenia insisted on these skills and significantly improved this activity;
- Improvement of communication;
- Hotel management skills, especially those related to food production in line with old and almost forgotten recipes;
- Language skills, the knowledge of English is important if Serbia wants to attract foreign tourists;
- Familiarity with culture, tradition, and local attractions.

However, training should be organized according to the needs of individual tourism entrepreneur. The training should include most professional institutions including faculties and coaches with working experience in village tourism. One of the best ways is organizing thematic workshops which could improve knowledge of professionals in this area.

Recommendations for further researches

First of all, researches should lead to information on the market itself. People in village tourism have a small amount of information for decision making. More knowledge can move this sector to efficient organization of their activities – from planning of accommodation capacities, marketing actions to skills obtained through training (Popesku, 2016).

Due to smaller costs, village tourism has chosen amateur marketing which has no significant impact on business (Cvijanovic & Vukovic, 2012). Therefore, researches need to be focused on certain marketing activities which can contribute to the development of village tourism. According to that, it is important to improve communication using modern technologies, websites, emails, better partner relationships, relationships with tourism agencies, tourism local organizations, printed brochures...

Why is village tourism so important? What are its advantages, incomes possibilities, possibilities of development, investment? Who can be helpful? What knowledge is necessary? Who needs to be employed? These are complex questions without answers since no important researches have been conducted.

Most problematic issues are related to organization and management. It is very important to determine the way of village tourism planning, training, and work with employees. Much information of this kind is not available so people rely on their intuition in order to define management of their organization.

There was an opinion that managers are daily faced with stress and problems. Nowadays, other categories of people (employed and unemployed) are equally faced with these issues. The fact that visiting village and nature has positive effects on rehabilitation and consolidation of health condition is very positive for the development of village tourism.

Attention should be paid to a different kind of training for people employed in village tourism and influence of local communities and organizations. Capacities of the local community should be defined including ways of connection between communities.

Finally, there is a need for information on literature related to this area. Nowadays, it is not hard to organize gatherings and meetings through which people could discuss the topics useful for people employed in village tourism.

Conclusion

General conclusion is that potentials for the development of village tourism in Serbia are large but not sufficiently used. There are many reasons for that. Among the most important ones are a lack of efficiency and interest by a state to provide help for this economic sector. This fact is also mentioned by the Strategy for tourism development in Serbia. This activity is not attractive since it does not offer safety nor guarantee for a good living. Everyone who wants to work in an area of village tourism should know that it can be provided only by an additional job in agriculture.

Regarding everything that village tourism can offer, it is recommended to combine it with other tourism offers in the region. In order to provide it, it is important to maintain good partnerships in this and other economic activities which can be helpful for village tourism.

Village tourism of Serbia should be a part of European tourism offer. It is the only way to provide future for this economic activity!

Moreover, it is important to provide right time training for people so they can use modern technologies and knowledge in an area of management. In order to achieve this, education institutions such as Faculty of tourism with prepared suitable programs should be included in this process.

People included in village tourism need to have an entrepreneur spirit and be dedicated to this work. It is important to have work as motivation rather than incomes. Good entrepreneur rarely considers incomes in advance – incomes should be obtained after good and quality work.

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