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# TV AS A FACTOR IN DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM

*Aleksandra Šarković<sup>1</sup>*;

## **Abstract**

*The preserved environment with functional ecological systems is the basis for the development of rural tourism. For such an approach, the local community plays a major role in creating a rural tourism product.*

*This paper will try to highlight the role of television as an auxiliary tool in raising the level of ecological awareness of the rural population, which besides natural resources is a decisive factor for the development of tourism in rural areas. The research is based on the assumption that the media play a major role in developing ecological awareness, and that television is the most important among them. The aim is to determine how television uses its power in the function of achieving a certain public interest what is the ecologically responsible behavior of the rural population and its contribution to the development of rural tourism.*

**Key Words:** *Ecological awareness, rural inhabitants, rural tourism, television*

**JEL classification:** *Q56*

## **Introduction**

Television is the most influential medium and has the most numerous auditorium (McQueen, 2000), which provides it with deep penetration into all spheres of society. Media theorists speak of the diverse functions that the media perform, (fun, escapist, distracting, socializing and ideological), and the informative and educational function of television is distinguished as primary (Lorimer, 1998, McKuley 1976, McQueen, 2000). The informative function of television is done by collecting a variety of information and transforming them into audiovisual messages that are receptive to viewers. Television can be a very good educational

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D Aleksandra Šarković, Serbian Broadcasting Corporation, Takovska 10, Beograd, aleksandrasarkovic@yahoo.com ; tel. 064 8612775

resource, through special programs (Oljača,1992), such as the programmes that were analyzed in this research.

Lemiš (2008) states that „because of the educational function and the fact that it is constantly present in all social spheres, many people perceive television as the potentially most influential factor of social change, national development and modernization of society "(Lemiš, 2008, page 253). According to Potter's opinion, television and mass media are factors that affect our attitudes, forming and strengthening existing ones; affect emotions, cause fear, pain, sorrow, happiness; stimulate physiological reactions (Potter, 2008).

According to Jarvis, television becomes a significant resource for the process of transforming the experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and feelings (Jarvis, 1995), which can represent a part of the education needed by rural dwellers in the protection of the environment. Improving of rural economy is increasingly based on rural tourism, which, due to its many advantages in relation to some other activities, has been singled out as one of the most important activities. The experiences of some European countries (eg Austria and Italy) have confirmed that village development models which are based primarily on the synergy of agricultural production and rural tourism can contribute to the revitalization and economic revitalization and strengthening of underdeveloped rural areas (Boskovic, 2012).

For such changes, apart from appropriate policies and effective institutional regulations, it is necessary to encourage rural residents, encourage and guide activities such as all types of rural tourism, but it is also necessary to work on their education and development of ecological awareness.

Environmental awareness, as a condition of building an ecological culture based on knowledge, valuation and behavior, contributes to the promotion of sustainable agricultural and rural development in terms of harmonizing agricultural production with the laws of nature and improving rural income on the one hand, as well as reducing the risk to natural ecosystems, on the other (Agenda21, Chapter 14, see Miltojević, 2006).

This paper deals with the role of special television programs in the process of forming of environmental awareness of inhabitants in rural areas, as a decisive factor for the development of rural tourism.

The paper starts from the following hypothesis:

- Television is the main source of information for the rural population about the importance of preserving the environment in rural areas.
- In Serbia, the possibilities of positive influence of television on the development of environmental awareness of inhabitants of rural areas have not been used in order to promote rural tourism as part of sustainable rural development.

### **Rural tourism - definition**

Rural areas have been considered for some time now to be attractive tourist destinations, although by the middle of the 20th century it was a relatively passive activity that was practiced by a small number of people. Since then, the scope and nature of rural tourism, but also the socio-economic structure of the villages have gone through some fundamental transformation. In many countries, rural tourism has become a significant tourist activity, and for a quarter of Europeans, rural areas have been selected as a holiday destination (Grolleau, 1987).

Smith et al. (2010) provide the following definition of rural tourism: "Rural tourism describes the forms of tourism activities that take place in rural areas and include local culture, traditions and economic activities as well as open-air activities and experiences achieved in an uninhabited rural environment. As a market niche, rural tourism obviously 'covers' narrow niches such as eco-tourism, nature tourism, agritourism, sports and adventure tourism, gastronomy and wine etc". (Rabotić, 2012).

In a wider context, rural tourism contributes to the preservation of the natural and cultural-historical heritage of the local community, prevents eviction from the so-called. "passive regions" and encourages the revalorization of the autochthonous values of the area (Krajinović et al. 2011)

Efficient and effective development of rural tourism is inconceivable without the preserved environment and spatial area in which ecological systems function without special disturbance. Rural tourism depends on a number of natural and cultural assets in the process of its development must be preserved, used in a sustainable manner and continue to improve. So, in addition to economic progress the rural tourism should establish responsibility for rural development in order to preserve the environment as a resource. For such an approach to the problem of the great

importance of human resources, i.e. the existence of awareness, knowledge and practice in the use of material (natural and built) resources and commitment for change in local communities (see: Leader, 1999; 2000).

The main activity of the rural population is the agrarian and in this sense its life and work can significantly affect the natural environment. Rural areas are also seen in literature as a good basis for the development of rural tourism, consisting of preserved landscapes and traditional features, such as architecture, cultural and historical monuments, local gastronomic specialties and traditional crafts. In most cases, farms engaged in farming within their household are also engaged in rural tourism. Bela Muhi insists on rural tourism as a component of sustainable rural development, as it can significantly contribute to the protection of nature and to provide resources for the survival and development of the village (Muhi, 2013).

That is why the ecological awareness of the inhabitants of rural areas is an important factor that influences the state and quality of the environment as one of the important capacities for the development of rural tourism.

### **Ecological-educational function of television**

According to many sources, television as the medium is the most important source of information and knowledge for the audience on environmental issues (Akca et al., 2006). Television through its basic didactic functions, such as convergence of reality that is not available in other learning processes, the awakening of interest in the subject of knowledge (in this case ecology) and the development of the ability to perceive, activity, imagination and thinking can be a significant auxiliary tool in ecological education, encouraging the development of sensitivity, awareness, understanding, critical thinking and the skills to solve the problems (Đorđević, 1979: 28).

The quality information that will cover different environmental areas of the media will influence the understanding of the problem, the quality and quantity of knowledge about the environment and the awareness of the viewers, because video material is the most effective way of learning (Padrao, 2012).

The significance of the media in realizing the public interest as responsible ecological behavior of people is proclaimed at the UN

Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Action Plan for Sustainable Development Agenda 21 was received, which states that it is the obligation of states and the United Nations to promote joint action with the media on improving the behavior, values and active participation of people in the protection and improvement of the environment. Chapter 36, Agenda 21 is dedicated to education and declares it by the following definition: "Education is critical to promoting sustainable development and improving people's capacity to tackle environmental issues and development".

Therefore, information and education on television plays an important role in the formation of ecological awareness and ecological culture. It is indisputable that "with the development of science and technology, the improvement of socio-economic relations, the spread of educational opportunities on the one hand and the development of the ecological crisis on the other hand, the means of mass communication, in particular television, receive important tasks in information and education for the protection of life environment." (Nikolić, 2012).

As environmental degradation in rural areas has an increasing dimensions and intensities, the ecological educational function of television for the rural population (despite the emergence of the Internet) continues to have an extremely high significance.

### **The importance of television ecological content for the rural population**

A key element of the sustainable development of rural areas and individual farms is the raising of ecological awareness among farmers in which the role of television is undoubtedly important, which informs about the harmful effects of human activities on land, water, air, plant and animal life and quality of life and thus influences the awareness of the need and importance of preserving these values. In addition to information, television has exceptional potentials for conveying advice and opinions from the domain of ecology, the population living in rural areas and where agricultural production is the mainstay of economic development. Television thus influences the formation of ecologically positive attitudes, ecological awareness and culture. The meaning of television content for the rural population in addition to information and education must also be a motivational character in order to bring viewers to personal action and behaviors that are environmentally friendly.

The potential influence of the media in acquiring knowledge on environmental protection, public attitudes and behavior have been recognized and investigated by several authors (Prathap, Ponnusamy, 2006) The superiority of television as a channel for acquiring knowledge over other media may be explained by its visual effects providing ease of learning (Prathap, Ponnusamy, 2006).

The largest part of research on the influence of media on the ecological awareness of spectators has been achieved in the developing countries where television is still, regardless of the increasing presence of the Internet and its influence, the most important mass media in information, entertainment and in the field of environment information and education. Among the researchers in this area is India. Surveys conducted in India on a random sample of 400 respondents focused on the impact of the media and their importance in spreading environmental awareness among 200 respondents from rural and 200 respondents from the urban area. Urban residents exposed to the influence of a large number of media show a higher level of awareness of environmental protection than those living in rural areas who are exposed to fewer media (Kappor, 2011).

Kappor states that in order to assess the efficiency of television programs in the three villages of Hisar district, a survey was conducted with the aim of investigating, examining and determining the usefulness of information in programs aimed at rural audiences. Among other things, the results of the research showed the following:

1. Specialised programmes for the rural population are not attractive as most programs because they are based on monoliths with low visual content;
2. Much more of the recommendations of TV specialists are intended for large producers than small farmers who make up the majority of the rural population (Kappor, 2011).

Hoerisch states that politicians understand better than the media editors how important environmental protection is, especially in rural areas where natural resources are most often located (forests, protected natural assets, mineral resources, land, etc.). Through many years of practice, politicians have realized that the field of environmental protection is suitable for promotion even through an active political campaign, while many editors of the media believe that programs that educate viewers on environmental issues cannot achieve a commercial effect (Hoerisch, 2002).

In India, the media are officially recognized as an important component of the long-term strategy and plan for the revitalization of rural areas. In this case, the goal of the media is to contribute to the lives of local communities and to focus on issues relating to education, health, the environment, agriculture and rural development of the community (Ghatak, 2010). The Ministry of Environment and Forestry of India, finances 50 seconds of information content that emphasizes the importance of preserving the natural resources prepared by the Discovery Channel and is broadcast on national television of India, four times a day, with the content changing for a month.

Kushwaha emphasizes that changing the current media structure and accessing problems can provide this sector with a better position and achieve the goals of adequate environmental education. He states that emotions and exaggeration in reporting are often the source of problems, and disagreements and conflicting opinions between experts are also being exploited skillfully. Making extreme views even by the scientific and professional public can be useful only to draw public attention and warn of danger (Kushwaha, 2015).

Many television programs in the world are aimed at precisely informing about the state of the environment and motivating inhabitants of rural areas to accept pro-ecological behavior. However, all research indicates that neither individuals nor societies are ready or even able to change habits and behavior overnight. The media therefore have the responsibility to systematically, objectively and accurately inform of the change in the environmental awareness of the rural areas inhabitants.

The British public service BBC has been broadcasting the show "Countryfile" (in translation, *Dosije Selo*) on its first channel since 1988 once a week. The show initially lasted 30 minutes, but due to its good reception, was extended to 60 minutes. Premiere is broadcast on the first channel, Sunday at 7 pm, and recorded in England, Scotland and Wales. The issue is described as "exploring issues of interest to the rural population, while showing and glorifying the beauty of the British village." Each program deals with a specific area, characteristics of plant and animal life, nature conservation, rural tourism, agriculture and food production in a sustainable manner, crafts, history, culture and social activities of the population. Support for the preservation and development of the village is also provided by the public figures that appear in the show.

The Austrian Public Service (ORF) broadcasts the Earth & People (*Land und Leute*) program (26 minutes) every other Saturday, 16:30, on the ORF2 channel. This magazine presents rural areas in Austria and their rural development in an affirmative way. The show has no advisory approach and has village life in its focus, displayed through the culture, tradition and customs of the village as an important part of the cultural heritage of Austria.

The Italian National Television RAI (RAI) broadcasts a special program dedicated to agriculture and the development of the village with special topics for each program on its first channel every Sunday at 12:20. The series is called the "Green Line" (Linea Verde), and each program lasts for about 56 minutes and contains an ecology and environmental protection topic because authors consider that "the relationship between a man and the environment is important not only for the preservation of soil and water and food production, but also because of an attractive nature suitable for the development of tourism.

Television Slovenia broadcasts the "People and the Earth" program at its First Channel every Sunday at 12:05. The show features farms throughout Slovenia, deals with seasonal agricultural issues, brings plenty of useful technical advice, informs about measures of agrarian policy and innovations in the field of legislation. A number of experts from faculties, schools and institutes working in agriculture, food industry or the rural development sector are involved in the preparation of the program. The show "People and Earth" is one of the oldest and most watched TV shows in Slovenia, which is shot three times a month in Maribor and once a month in Koper.

The primary goal of all these programs is to improve life in rural areas. Although modern agricultural production relies on agroecological approaches through the principles of good agricultural practice and measures of sustainable rural development, which are partly promoted in these programs, it cannot be said that these programmes are primarily focused on ecology and environmental protection in rural areas.

### **Ecological television content for the rural population in Serbia**

Previous research of media coverage of environmental issues in Serbia shows that the media primarily deal with this issue at the moment of accidents or natural disasters. As Marković states in his paper, although

environmental information is not represented in an appropriate way on individual television channels, it can be noted that environmental broadcasting on television programs is gaining in quality and that television is becoming one of the institutions that participate in informal education of people (Marković, 2010).

Although the number of specialized broadcasts with ecological topics is relatively small, this issue is dealt with well in the informative and educational program. At the RTS public service within the Scientific and Educational Program there is an Ecology Program dealing with the issues of ecology, environmental protection and sustainable rural development.

The tradition of preparing and broadcasting shows about the countryside and agriculture has been in Serbia since the creation of national television in 1958. The main goal of the program was modernization of agriculture, education of rural population and affirmation of positive aspects of tradition and culture of the village. The first show titled "For the Farmers" was prepared and broadcast since the beginning of the television operation in 1958. The programme „Znanje imanje” (“Knowing–Having”), has been produced by the Serbian public service broadcaster since 1972 until today. It has been the most popular one all along. Its high rating was first recorded in the 1974 audience survey (Babić-Erleman, 1974).

The show “Furrows”, ("Brazde") which was first prepared by TV Novi Sad, followed by Radio Television of Vojvodina, also has a long tradition. The programme “Furrows” has been broadcasting since 1975 on the public service channel of Vojvodina as a product "in the service of farmers, livestock farmers and other producers", which, through field records and the participation of competent guests, analyzes current topics and presents the opinions of agrarian employees.

Commercial television channels have recognized their niche in the rural population program relatively late. The first show outside the state TV system was the programme "Knowledge as a Gift" (“Znanje na poklon”) since 1997 on local TV channels in Serbia that were members of ANEM. Since 2000, the show has been regularly broadcast on TV B92. The show is broadcast on the same TV today as "Good Land" (“Dobra zemlja”).

The "Host" (“Domaćin”) show has been broadcast on TV Fox since 2007, which later changed its name to TV Prva. Its producer, however, is not

this television, but an independent production company RAF. The numerous programmes confirm that television in many parts of the world accepts that in addition to the informative function, it has the function of educating viewers. In order to determine the importance of television for the ecological consciousness of viewers, an interdisciplinary research was needed to combine elements of social ecology, agroecology and communicology. On the other hand, the commitment to timely informing about the causes of the ecological crisis and the imperatives of environmental protection should be a sufficient reason for the commitment of TV channels to broadcast as much of the content as possible for the formation and spreading of environmental awareness of the inhabitants of rural areas.

According to the survey, which included the entire auditorium in Serbia in the period of January-December 2012, programmes about agriculture and village that were broadcast on the second channel of the RTS were more in comparison with the programmes of similar thematic content that were broadcast on TV B92 and TV Prva. The most watched was the “Knowing-Having” programme, rated at 2.4, which was twice the rating of Host (1.2) on TV Prva (Josifović, Senić 2013).

In 2014, a survey was conducted in Serbia on a sample of 314 inhabitants of rural areas. The results of the survey showed that most of the respondents (42.4%) had radio and television as the most important source of information, and that through PSSS (agricultural expert advisory service) about environmental pollution as a consequence of agricultural production informed only 13.7% of respondents (Šarković et al., 2016).

Table 1: *Annual rating of special TV shows for residents of rural areas*

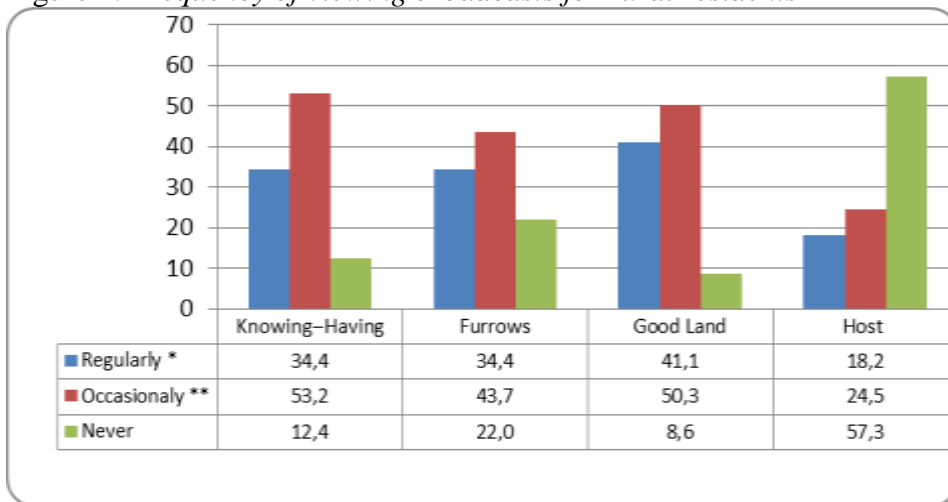
Programmes	Rating	
	Average number of viewers per minute	%
Host	81.000	1,2
Good Land	112.000	1,6
Furrows	123.000	1,8
Knowing-Having	166.000	2,4

Source: Šarković, 2016

The research, which covered 314 inhabitants of rural areas in Serbia, analyzed four special programs aimed at rural residents. All four analyzed

broadcasts were broadcast on televisions with national coverage. The results showed that the show "Good Land" had the highest percentage of regular viewers (41.1%), and the show "Host" the smallest (18.2) (Figure 1) (Šarković, 2016).

Figure 1: *Frequency of viewing broadcasts for rural residents*



Regularly \*- two to four times a month

Occasionally\*\*- once in three months

Source: Šarković, 2016

The research shows that none of the four analyzed programmes on environmental topics were for a specific thematic group. The ecological dimension of rural development was processed through examples of rural tourism and supplementary activities in farms, with the emphasis being on individual, positive households in mountain villages or in the villages in Vojvodina (Šarković, 2016). Emissions were not directed at the special treatment of rural tourism as a relevant topic in terms of emphasizing its particular importance and the problems that accompany it.

## Conclusion

The development of rural tourism is based on the preservation of natural and cultural assets that need to be further developed in the development process in a sustainable manner. For such an approach to the problem, there is a great significance of the existence of awareness, knowledge and practice of using material (natural and constructed) resources as well as definitions for implementing changes in local communities.

Media has an irreplaceable role in education of rural residents, because they are faster and more accessible than other sources and can reach a large number of people.

Bearing in mind the importance of television as a medium, it has been found that specialized contents intended for the rural population are a convenient means of acquiring environmental knowledge and in that way they influence the change of the ecological awareness of the inhabitants of rural areas.

Environmental protection represents a global commitment in the new millennium, and sustainable rural development in Serbia is covered by different strategies and action plans. Nevertheless, there is no specialized broadcast on national TV channels whose focus is on the ecological awareness of the inhabitants of rural areas. Especially information and education programs on agriculture are specialized. The concept and thematic structure of these programs are adapted to agricultural producers and deal mainly with topics related to the improvement of agricultural production. They are not adapted to the goal of developing the ecological awareness of all inhabitants of rural areas as an important factor for the development of rural tourism.

Specialized educational television content for the rural population in order to improve their pro-ecological behavior will contribute to easier and faster acceptance of the principles of sustainable rural development and the improvement of rural tourism.

In order to have specialized media content on ecological topics, ecological values and pro-ecological behavior, they must be synchronized with other media content and activities of other social actors.

This work has confirmed both specific hypotheses: that television is the most important source of knowledge of the rural population about the importance of preserving the environment and that possibilities of positive influence of television on the development of ecological awareness of rural areas inhabitants are not exploited in Serbia. It points to the need to develop a new concept of TV shows that have an impact on the ecological awareness of the rural population as a decisive factor in the promotion of rural tourism in Serbia.

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