

**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**International**  
**Scientific**  
**Conference**

**31 May - 2 June, 2018**  
**Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia**

**2018**

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

**Tourism in the Era of Digital Transformation**



**THEMATIC**  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**II**



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



# STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

*Rural tourism is a serious factor in the development of rural areas. This is also supported by global developments in which mass tourism is increasingly losing its dynamism in collision with the coming individualism in choosing the type of destination and travel model. Ecology, culture, identity of destinations active attitude towards holiday and recreation, new forms and contents of the offer, theme parks and health are some of the trends in differentiating tourist interests. In these and this kind of conditions rural tourism encounters growing developmental, marketing, managerial and economic difficulties in its development. This requires finding an appropriate model of rural tourism, management which would be based primarily on the sustainable development of rural areas. This study aims to point out a possible model of strategic management of the development of rural tourism.*

Key Words: *rural tourism, strategic management, management model.*  
JEL classification: *R110*

## Introduction

The interest of tourists for rural areas and staying in them for the purpose of relaxing and using hobby activities has a tradition of over a hundred years and a complex structure that has been shaded by the current trends that were present during the 20th century. A large number of rural areas over the past decades, thanks to natural resources and rarities, cultural and historical heritage, characteristic of traditional architecture, folklore heritage, have come to the fore in the interest of tourists who love rural

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areas and rural tourism. The modern tourist market is looking for new forms of leisure time. Mass tourism emphasized demand for sun and sea has reached the saturation point, both on the side of tourism demand and on the supply side. Modern tourists are looking for new places and ways where and how to spend their vacation or short breaks, often driven by the desire to get to know the domicile (receptive) environments they were in, as well as to search for autochthonous and authentic values, and forgotten ways of life. Until recently, fearfully speaking about rural areas as potentially attractive tourism destinations, today there is no doubt that rural areas with their specificities have come to the focus of interest of modern tourists. Increasing the role of the tertiary sector in relation to the primary and secondary in the national economies of the developed countries, the overall trend of return to nature and a healthy lifestyle, intensive awareness building on the need to preserve a healthy environment are just factors that are at the beginning of a long chain of factors that have caused intense the growth of rural tourism and the increase in the volume of tourists' interest in this type of vacation.

### **Rural areas - at the focus of interest**

New trends, except that they caused growth of interest in staying in rural destinations, led to the creation of awareness of modern tourists. Modern tourists differ greatly from the traditional view of tourists. A modern tourist wants an active holiday, the feeling of belonging to the environment in which he resides, has a highly developed ecological awareness, an accentuated need to learn about the environment in which he resides, is adaptable to the environment in which he resides and the conditions that govern him. Rural tourism, in many ways, owes its popularity to a wide range of potential activities that can be done by tourists in rural areas. Mountain biking, orientation routes, "survival" in nature, visiting farms and cats, picking medicinal herbs, paragliding are just some of the many potential activities that a tourist can deal with in rural areas. Special interest tourists show for the visit of craftsmen who are engaged in nurturing and preserving old crafts and participating in the preparation of traditional dishes. Thanks to modern trends, tourism and recreation in rural areas are increasingly seen as sources of economic recovery of rural regions. We are witnesses that tourism undoubtedly represents one of the few potential opportunities for recruiting redundant labor in rural regions and quite clearly another aspect of the rural economy. Its significance in the exploitation of the existing tourist potentials of rural regions is unquestionable. Therefore, it is clear that

tourism has a very strong impact on the economic, cultural and natural features of rural regions.

Table 1: *Activities in rural tourism*

TRADITIONAL ACTIVITIES	NEW ACTIVITIES
Riding a car	Snowboarding
Walking	Snowmobiling
Excursions	Mountain biking
Studying the nature	Visit to Inaccessible spaces
Photographing	Orientation Cross
Sightseeing	"Survival in nature"
Hunting and fishing	Surfing
Attending rural events	Adrenaline sports
Visit to the sites of historic importance	Paragliding

Source: *Butler, R., 1999, p.45*

### **Challenges of the environment in tourism**

The natural environment and culture of one nation is a factor that significantly influences the supply and demand of one product for outside the tourist industry. On the other hand, it is exactly that environment and culture of a nation representing an important component of the product itself that offers tourist activity. In tourism, the service can be provided to the customer during a journey that may take a hypothetical one year and takes place from one end of the world to the other. A special relationship between the tourism industry and its constraint indicates that much deeper analysis and understanding of the environmental impact is needed than would otherwise be necessary for some other economic activity. Every environment, of any economic activity, contains a large number of interdependent factors that influence the nature of the activity and its activities. In order to understand their interconnections and the degree of interdependence and influence on the economy and its activities, they need to be separated and categorized. When considering the influence of environmental factors on tourism, the SCEPTICAL method can be applied for their wider analysis (Moutinho, 2000). This method would include the following factors that are factors influencing tourism: social factors, cultural factors, economic factors, physical factors, technical factors, international factors, infrastructure and communication resources, administrative and institutional factors, legal and political factors. Each of the above-mentioned factors may, depending on the circumstances for

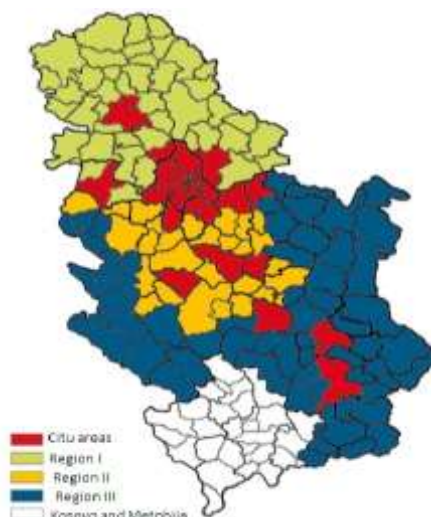
tourism as an economic branch, represent a chance or danger. Significant moments and challenges are found in the correct assessment and classification of the condition of certain factors, the dangers and chances that arise from it, and, furthermore, in distinguishing between occasional short-term occurrences of significant changes in the environment. A key challenge to be addressed to is the decision-making that needs to be avoided during the course of business, and to take advantage of the chances that prevail in the environment.

### **Rural tourism is the development potential of the Serbian villages**

Rural tourism is a concept that, according to the definition given in the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, is defined as a spectrum of activities, services and additional content which must be organized by the rural population. Rural tourism should be developed in family farms with the aim of attracting as many tourists as possible and generating additional income. This product is based on the principles of sustainability, and therefore it offers tourists the elements of the rural environment, nature, and presents the traditional hospitality and living values of the local population and as such is a lever of economic development and raising living standards in rural communities. Europe has been a world leader in rural tourism in the last few decades, and the current trends show that it will remain in the next decade. There are between 600,000 and 1,000,000 households in the world that provide rural tourism services, they have between 6 and 12 million beds and provide between 1.5 and 3 million jobs. In Serbia, rural tourism deals with over 300 households. The offer contains about 2,500 beds (Hopić, 2009a). Rural tourism is a broad term that includes within its frames of several different types of tourism: tourism in rural households, residential tourism, homestead tourism, adventure tourism, sports and recreational tourism, health tourism, educational tourism, transit tourism, camping tourism, nautical tourism, continental tourism, religious tourism, hunting tourism, fishing tourism, wine tourism, gastronomic tourism, nature, close tourism, eco-tourism, mixed, etc. (Kušen, 2006). Despite recognizing the importance of rural tourism as a possible means for the development of rural areas, Serbia is at the initial stage of its development, especially when it comes to rural tourism within rural households. Although there are positive examples, it is characteristic that previous projects have not been based on national rural development programs, but exclusively on private initiative of individuals and groups. This form of tourism is still insufficiently recognizable in the tourist product of Serbia and there are

no adequate mechanisms for financing entrepreneurial ideas in this area. On the other hand, Serbia has good conditions for the development of rural tourism due to its geographical position, natural beauties, a landscape suitable for various types of recreation, gastronomy, folklore, rich cultural heritage.

Map 1: *Rural areas of Serbia defined according to the OECD rural criteria*



Source: *Bogdanov, 2007, p.117*

Considering the above arguments, in 2007 and 2008, the MAFWM introduced incentives to support rural development through investment in rural tourism. The aim of this measure was to subsidize the development of rural tourism by equipping and reconstructing facilities in marginal areas, thereby increasing the degree of diversification of the rural economy and increasing the number of possible sources of income for the rural population. The planned funds were intended for: renovation of traditional rural households in the function of tourism where the ultimate goal is the categorization of capacities, upgrading and adaptation of facilities, procurement of equipment for dealing with rural tourism and educational and promotional activities in rural tourism. In the upcoming period, it is necessary to work more intensively on capacity building, development and promotion of rural tourism in view of the development of rural tourism in the region and the EU (competitiveness), but also on the development and modernization of the infrastructure necessary for the development of rural tourism (Hopić, 2009b).

## **Strategic exploitation of tourist potentials of the villages of Serbia**

For 2020, the World Tourism Organization predicts that there will be 1.6 billion tourists in the world. Today we are witnessing a global crisis. In crisis processes, global tourism will preserve regional distribution, but it will increase the movement towards rural areas and eco-centers. The crisis also imposes the care of tourism workers to preserve what they have and, in addition to investing, reconstruct it rather than move to new greenfield investments (Milenkovic, 2009). Based on the past, it is clear that new forms of tourism and new spaces must be found. The tourists found the answer to excessive crowds on the narrow seashore by themselves, spontaneously, just as they found and once released the seashore. Such places, offering real natural opportunities for a real holiday, were found by tourists in the villages. Today, there is developed rural tourism in France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Austria. Bearing in mind the mentioned countries on one side and Serbia on the other, it is clear that Serbia does not lack in the tourist potential of the village. Favorable geographical position, mild and pleasant climate, diverse relief of Serbia - with landscapes that create mountains, hills, slopes, meadows, forests, orchards, springs, streams, rivers, lakes. The rich flora and fauna, healthy air, water, food, peace, tumultuous past and rich history, cultural and historical monuments, folklore, old crafts, hospitable people - all these are elements from which you can make an extraordinary tourist offer that would be hit in the world. Bearing in mind the real tourism potential of rural areas in Serbia, it is clear that this is an underused potential which can be a very serious instrument for securing financial resources primarily for rural households in the first place, and for other economic entities operating in rural areas.

Rural households engaged in tourism are given the opportunity to sell their farm products directly in the form of prepared meals for tourists, besides renting room for lodging, and therefore have more benefit and significant economic effect from their products than in case they sold at the markets. The advantage of multifunctional agriculture is in achieving greater profit through development and other activities, especially rural tourism, in its forms: eco-tourism (in protected areas), ethno tourism (emphasizing historical and ethnological value), health and recreational tourism, as well as educational tourism (Pejanović et al., 2015). The broader economic, social and general social interests of the community are also being realized, starting from an increase in the employment rate, stimulating young people to remain in the countryside, and increasing the

generality of economic growth and development in rural areas (Maksimović-Milošević, et al., 2015).

In recent years, tourism manifestations organized in rural regions have been gaining in importance, and their purpose is to promote the tourism potentials and the ethno and cultural values of the region. These manifestations, if they are well-organized, attract more thousands of people. One of the most important strategic goals of Serbia's agriculture is to support the sustainable development of the village through the diversification of the rural economy, with the greatest importance in the process of diversification being attached to the development of rural tourism. Tourism related to specific interests encompasses several types of tourism for which there is an adequate demand and which show steady growth, with the expected tendency of even faster growth in the future. This includes the interests of culture, archeology, art, architecture, sports, music, hobbies, hunting and fishing, countryside and other. This group of different interests is especially important in Serbia with those types of tourism in which a tourist product has already been established to a certain extent. One of these types is tourism in the countryside. In the development of a small, yet high-quality nucleus in rural tourism, environmental elements should be maximally developed (the development of eco-villages with different forms of healthy life, such as healthy food, walking and others).

The Republic of Serbia has extremely favorable conditions for the development of tourism in the countryside. First of all, these are especially favorable conditions of preserved nature, with mild climate, clean air, unpolluted rivers and lakes, rich flora and fauna. These benefits are particularly pronounced in mountainous areas - on the slopes of Tara, Divčibar, Ozren, Povlen, Rtanj, Bukulje, Oplenca, Suve Planine. Staying in nature provides tourists with opportunities for walking, recreation, sporting activities, organized trips to nearby caves, springs and waterfalls, hunting and fishing opportunities, horseback riding, hiking, reading of forest fruits and medicinal herbs and other recreational and entertaining activities in the countryside. Tourists who show interest in this can be involved in performing for them, until then probably, underperforming agricultural works.

A large number of villages are in the vicinity of valuable cultural and historical monuments, which tourists can pay an organized visit. Traditional architecture with the characteristics of a certain area, as well

as products of old crafts and handicrafts are of great cultural value, through which the rich heritage of our people is realized. It is also possible to organize a visit to various exhibitions that are organized in the surroundings, especially naive painters, as well as tourist events and traditional events through which people learn about customs, cultural and historical features of traditional village life. This diversity of tourist resources and the richness of cultural heritage are especially enriched by the hospitality of the local population, who, in accordance with tradition, welcomes each tourist as a friend and presents a rich trend of healthy, natural food before him (Živković, 2012). When it comes to "strategic", then it implies that it contains the analysis and the ultimate goal, the steps that arise from the analysis, and the planned directions and paths reach the ultimate goal making it feasible and realistic. Documents that can guide the developmental development in the field of tourism and its importance in rural areas are prescribed by the legislative system of the Republic of Serbia: Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, Strategy of Tourism Development of the Republic of Serbia; as well as the less flexible guidelines contained in the legislation and by-laws: the Law on Tourism, the Law on Spas, the Decree on the Establishment of Programs on the Scheduling and Use of Funds for Tourism Development Projects, the Regulation on Determining the Criteria and the Closer Conditions for Micro-Crediting the Promotion of Quality Catering Supply of Small and Medium- companies in the field of tourism.

The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia identifies rural tourism of the same importance as other primary branches in which the tourist offer of Serbia should be developed. It is seen as an important product of Serbia's future tourism, by which Serbia will show its orientation towards the nature and sustainable development of tourism. Rural tourism of Serbia is highly dispersed through its regions and provides various forms of experience both in visual sense (architectural) and sensual (scenes, scents). It is an opportunity to revitalize (renew), or build several rural resorts that will respect the traditional architecture and symbols of the region in which it will come to life. Marketing packages create special packages with farmland, rural resort and rural villages, as well as a special type of camping in the rural area. Initially, it is intended for domestic guests from urban areas, as well as foreign residents in Serbia, ie passengers in transit. The processes that are important for tourism, as outlined in this document, are the privatization of the tourist offer as well as its awareness raising (promotion) in the international market.

While the reason for the development of rural tourism in the developed countries of Europe is the growing interest of tourists for this kind of vacation, in Serbia, if nothing else, the basic inspiration should be a village in itself, raising its economic importance and autonomy. The fact is that the first association in rural tourism preserved the nature and idyllic way of life, but it cannot be denied that nature is not enough. Considering the current situation in which most of the villages in Serbia are located, the strategic exploitation of the tourist potential of the villages would mean: exploitation of the excess of housing, employment of free human resources, as well as attracting new labor by returning young people to the village, selling their own agricultural and other products in a higher stage without transport costs, lease of sales space, time and energy consumption, at more favorable prices, creation of better living conditions for young people in rural areas, through the development of the village and raising the standards of life to the desired higher level, the formation of a new family business, with better use of the existing ones resources and their development orientation to new needs, the development of new and better utilization of the existing abilities of the members of the host.

Strategic utilization of the tourist potentials of the villages in this context should not lose sight of the importance of internet promotion, that is, the information provided in this way that becomes widely available, facilitating accessibility for potential users who can easily decide if they are familiar with the offer.

The basic idea is to base the planning, i.e. the future of the region or village by returning to history, i.e. finding the real identity of the region and people and the activities that were leading when the settlement was at its peak. By locating a local identity, the following steps can be made: raising awareness of the values of this type, awareness of the resources that are realistically present in the given area, and finally actively, honestly and also aware of the involvement of local vals and politicians who by their example should encourage and inspire the population on sustainable behavior. By creating such conditions, many, morphologically different, villages of Serbia will be able to find their place in the tourist offer market. Rural tourism presents with all its tourism concepts a truly important instrument for the development of rural environments. In rural tourism, adequately conceived and implemented in practice, it primarily aims at employing excess workforce in rural areas. An example of Slovenian rural tourism is unequivocal, 40 percent of the workforce out of

the village is employed, and about 50 million Euros are invested in development programs in this field each year. In Croatia, the employment of labor surplus in this sector is between 17 and 19 percent, while this percentage in Bulgaria and Romania ranges from 6 to 12 percent. It is obvious that the political structures at the level of the republic, the local self-government, on the one hand, and the Serbian host, on the other, have to coordinate and coordinate their activities with the aim of improving the development of rural areas. Bearing in mind that over 80% of Serbia represent rural areas, it is clear that the size and significance of rural development for the benefit of the entire country (Todorović & Bjeljac, 2007).

### **Planning and managing the development of rural tourism**

Tourism, as a global socio-economic phenomenon, has seen steady and stable growth in the last six decades. Modern trends in the development of international tourism rest on the peculiarities of tourist demand, as well as on the appropriate adjustment of the tourist offer. With this in mind, it can be estimated that tourism is in the process of constant and powerful changes. Changes in tourism arise, primarily, from changing structural elements, or structural transformation of tourism as a whole. The basic changes, which make tourism extremely turbulent, concern the significant action of environmental factors, linked with the increasing awareness of the need to preserve the basis of its development - space, or the natural environment. These changes have caused the need for new considerations related to the development of tourism, based on two basic postulates - the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources, on which the development of tourism is based, and the emphasis on the social costs of tourism development. Tourist propaganda is one of the instruments of tourism policy for achieving certain goals that policy makers need to define in advance. This means that the actions of tourist propaganda were previously conceived, i.e. consciously determined in relation to the objectives. The means and methods used by tourist propaganda are common to all forms of commercial propaganda, but are adapted to the specific requirements of business and tourist policy makers to draw attention to the wider circle of tourists, of that part of the population that has objective conditions to engage in tourist trips. Tourist propaganda works, above all, on the development of preferences and wishes for tourist travel, and then influences decision-making on realization of wishes, i.e. about undertaking concrete actions by potential tourists, as it wanted to achieve tourist propaganda. Tourist propaganda must be

viewed integrally with other instruments of tourism or business policy (price policy, tourism development policy, organization of sales arrangements, etc.). It is certain that a very large number of factors influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the tourist propaganda of rural regions as a tourist and hunting-tourist destination. Still, when undertaking propaganda activities, one must bear in mind the Chinese proverb: "Strike into your gong and sell your sweets" (Živković, 2017). The complexity of tourism as a business and social activity determines that the planning and management of tourism development is specific and requires special organization at all levels. The planning of tourism development is essentially a process based on research, the aim of which is to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human well-being and the quality of the natural /environmental environment. It is carried out at several levels, in accordance with the character of tourism, whereby it is particularly important to find a balance between certain levels of organization, especially within tourist destinations (the relationship between state and parastatal bodies at all levels, on the one hand, and on the other hand, touristic economy). Rural tourism also has a number of specificities that must be respected in planning and management. The overall goal of planning and managing the development of rural tourism would be to create a balance between demand and supply, i.e. total capacities (spatial and other) in order to minimize conflicts and fully utilize natural bases for tourism development without degrading the environment (Popesku, 2018a).

During the survey, specific groups of subjects were observed. First of all, these are subjects whose strategic business and life interests are directly, indirectly related to the use of current and currently available tourism potentials. On the other hand, there are real groups of entities that can potentially be interested in investing their funds in rural areas. A set of stakeholders consists of the following groups:

- Current and potential users of currently available tourist resources in rural regions. This group represents a group whose interests and expectations, in a very clear and direct way, influence the formulation of the model of sustainable tourism development. Bearing in mind that tourists in modern times of modern information technologies have great possibilities of collecting information and choosing among several similar destinations, it is clear that the model of sustainable development of tourism must be adapted and determined by the current and potentially expected wishes of tourists. All this does not

ambiguously indicate that this is a key stakeholder group that imposes rules of conduct in business for other interested groups.

- Local people. The population of one area represents an extremely important and relevant factor, which should be taken into consideration when formulating the model of sustainable tourism development. Particularly, the interests of the population in the field of tourism are emphasized when it comes to a municipality that is poorly developed, which is conditioned by the intensive migratory movements of the younger population of the population towards the more developed regions. The dominant interest of the local population is the growth of business activities, which is quite clear because the growth of the economy leads to the creation of new jobs, income growth, the acquisition of new knowledge, advancement in professional careers. If it arises from the fact that only an economically innocent man is a free man, it is also clear why the population is primarily interested in the development of tourism in the municipality because they expect above all a greater possibility of employment due to the creation of new jobs.
- Local government. It is unclear that one of the main interests of local self-government is primarily the economic growth and development of the municipality. Economic growth and development as a starting point have an expansion of the tax base and an increase in employment opportunities.
- Government of the Republic of Serbia with the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development. The Government of the Republic of Serbia with its line ministries is tasked primarily to protect one region from potential degradation. It is also a special obligation to adapt long-term strategic development plans to real-life situations in some regions, and thus successfully implement them in these same regions.
- Private entrepreneurs. During the past period, private entrepreneurs have taken some steps towards investing in tourism. What is characteristic of most of the initiatives of private entrepreneurs is that there is no realistic assessment of one's own possibilities and desires, on the one hand, and on the other hand assessing the potential of a potential clientele. The missing link is certainly an advisory body that would adequately and honestly observe private entrepreneurs, and their preferences and initiatives have been corrected and directed on the right path.
- Large domestic and international investors - What characterizes this group of stakeholders is the rapid response to the newly emerging market situation, whereby profit is the main motivational factor, with

a very clear view of the conditions that they expect to be provided in order to start with investing. This primarily relates to requirements related to the resolved property-legal situation with the land, the access roads, the electricity, water and sewage networks. They are also interested in the existence of certain plans and long-term strategies for the development of one area and their potential impact on the activity to be dealt with.

- Citizens' associations appear primarily in the field of promotion of specific forms of tourism, where these associations are responsible for the development of specific forms of tourism.

The concept of sustainable tourism development, which is especially important for the development of rural tourism, can become the basis for the purposeful development of tourism in tourist destinations at all levels if its principles are included in the tourism development planning process, especially strategic, and if expressed in the strategic goals of development. The basic, or priority, objectives of tourism development, within the planning process can be very numerous, varied and conflicting. They can be expressed in economic, social and environmental terms. Accepting awareness of the need to determine the strategic objectives of tourism development that are broader than economic ones implies greater influence of the public sector, that is, state and parastatal bodies. One of the basic preconditions for successful planning and management of the sustainable development of rural tourism is the active involvement of the rural community, that is, the local population in the process. This involvement is necessary because nature, or the natural environment, is an important factor in the overall quality of life of the inhabitants of rural areas. Any use of this resource for the purposes of tourism development, without the consent of the local community, may be assessed by the local population as an abuse and represent a disincentive factor in the development of rural tourism. The existence of a balance or partnership relationship among numerous participants in the development of rural tourism is another important factor in the success of planning and managing the development of rural tourism. The center of attention is primarily the relationship between the public and the private sector, ie between state and parastatal bodies, on the one hand, and on the other, tourism companies and all other organizations that are directly and indirectly involved in the development of rural tourism. This partnership relationship should result in inclusion in the process of planning and managing the development of rural tourism, wider social and environmental issues. The aim of the sustainable development of rural

tourism is that visitors/tourists actively participate in the overall process in order to communicate their overall behavior to the set development goals, primarily to protect and preserve the natural environment and cultural and historical heritage. It is about directing the behavior of visitors/tourists, i.e. about managing the way of using all resources in rural areas, by visitors/tourists (visitor management). One of the most common ways of realizing this impact is the publication of official codes of conduct so that visitors, or tourists, can adapt part of their responsibility to protect the resources of rural tourism by adapting their behavior. Turbulent changes in the tourism market, both on the demand side of the tourist and on the side of the tourist offer require constant adaptation of all participants in the process. This implies that the planning and management process must be continuous and pervaded by innovative approaches. The main goal is the tendency towards a proactive approach in the protection and preservation of all resources related to the development of rural tourism. Such an approach can be achieved by accepting the following facts:

- The environmental and business objectives, or commercial objectives, must coincide in the long run.
- The planning process for the development of rural tourism begins, after situational analysis, by researching all relevant factors of tourism development, as well as the characteristics of the rural area, which have assumptions for the development of tourism.
- The next stage of the planning process is defining the development goals.
- The following is followed by a phase of analysis and synthesis, or conclusions based on the results of the research.
- At the stage of drafting proposals and recommendations, the developmental alternatives offered are compared in relation to the defined goals of tourism development, the impact on the local community and other factors and based on that, plans and policies are formulated and recommendations are formulated.
- The implementation and management phase is essentially a continuous process in order to constantly check the level of achievement of the defined objectives. It should be based on determining the degree of satisfaction of tourists, assessing the realized economic effects, especially in relation to the local population, assessing the overall impacts of tourism development on the natural and socio-cultural environment, and adapting to regional

and national plans and programs of tourism development , especially rural (Popescu, 2018b).

A special aspect of managing the development of rural tourism is reflected in the need for staff training. It is understood that the development of tourism should lead, on the one hand, to increase employment related to the provision of products and services for tourists and, on the other hand, to provide additional earnings for already employed people based on seasonal employment. In order to achieve this in a quality manner, it is necessary to educate key participants in meeting the needs of tourists. These are, first of all: hosts, owners of houses for renting tourists, small hotels, restaurants, campgrounds - they need to be educated about the needs of tourists, refer them to knowledge about management, bookkeeping, providing conditions for recreation of guests, safety, ways of maintaining hygiene for tourists, as well as to expand their knowledge of the natural, cultural and other characteristics of their area; the entire local population - to participate in a meaningful way in the realization of a joint project of rural tourism development; staff in local tourist information centers, local tourist guides and animators - in order to gain wide knowledge about the characteristics of the area, especially tourist resources, ways of promoting a tourist product, recreational techniques, etc. (Popesku, 2018c). Members of the rural household who provide services are the cornerstone of success in rural tourism. Human values and attitudes are the basis for this, but vocational training is needed in order to increase the ability to satisfy numerous demands that contemporary rural households engaged in tourist activity pose modern trends in tourism and high standards in providing services to potential tourists.

### **Conclusion**

Researches have shown the need for clearly defined directions for the development of rural tourism. There is a need for the importance of coordinating the activities of different entities that exist in the area of one region and directly linking their activity or interest with the use of the tourist potentials of the region. Having in mind the real tourism potential of the Republic of Serbia, which are very poorly used and in reality represent more than a serious resource of economic growth and the development of the performed research, they did not doubtfully show the following:

- During the previous period, adequate valorization of the realistic tourism resources of rural regions was lacking.
- There are no clearly defined tourist products offered on the market.
- There is no ongoing marketing activity aimed at promoting the tourism potentials of rural regions.
- There is a complete lack of activities aimed at the education of that part of the population that is interested in dealing with rural tourism within their household.
- There is no real serious organizational unit that would continuously deal with the coordination of activities on the development and improvement of the quality of the tourist offer.
- Alertly few accommodation capacities whose disadvantage is especially noticeable when organizing large tourist events.

The solution for the real existing accumulated problems in the field of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia, which would result in improvement of the quality of the tourist offer, and hence the real growth and development of tourism should be sought in a clearly formulated management model. This model would clearly specify the holders of tourism development and, at the same time, the future directions of tourism development. The basis for the future sustainable development of rural tourism should be based on the establishment of coordination centers for the development of rural tourism in the territories that fulfill the conditions for dealing with rural tourism. These centers would employ professionals in the fields of tourism, management and marketing. Coordination centers would be the bearers of all activities related to the development of tourism in the rural region. The main activities for these centers:

- The Coordination Center would first of all be tasked with clearly defining tourism products of the rural region and clearly highlighting their competitive advantage on the market.
- To undertake continuous marketing activities, so that the tourist destination is constantly in the interest of the public, so that in a potentially acceptable way, potential clients would be represented in their own beauty. Successful marketing approach to tourism in general and thus rural is achieved by a good marketing plan, respecting trends in tourism, defining goals, instruments and programs for their realization and satisfying the needs and wishes of tourists (Cvijanović & Ružić, 2017).

- The Coordination Center would be tasked with coordinating activities between a number of really different entities whose economic interests in the area of tourism in the territory are at some point in a hostile state.
- The Coordination Center would also have the task of training the interested population for performing activities in the field of rural tourism.
- One of the important activities would be the establishment of an integrated quality management system for all entities that are interested in the activities in the field of tourism.
- Take action to intensify and promote the entrepreneurial activity of the local population, which would be in the function of developing and improving the quality of the tourist offer.
- It promotes activities related to the construction of infrastructure facilities and the expansion of accommodation capacities.
- Initiates the development of projects related to the development of tourism in the area and helps to apply interested entities for incentives in national and international funds.
- Organizes tourist manifestations in the territory and organizes the performances of individuals, associations and organizations from the territory of the municipality on similar manifestations in the country and abroad.
- The tourism product of rural tourism must also have adequate sales channels. The coordination center would be tasked to undertake activities that would have overcome not organization in fulfilling the capacities of tourist facilities in the villages and selling through tourist agencies for a direct result. The organized way of selling will greatly contribute to better interlacing the supply and demand for vacation in the countryside and certainly help rural households to fully value significant investments in tourism. On the demand side, in accordance with world experiences, there are tendencies that point to more sophistication of tourist demand and its perceptibility in relation to quality, content, price and other elements of specific destinations.

It is clear from the above that the strategic management of the development of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia is based on the formation of an efficient management of the organization, with a flexible management structure and a clearly defined schedule of duties and responsibilities, whereby the vision of the development of tourism and the

goal in which it pursues a sustainable development tourism in the rural areas.

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