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Some aspects of rural tourism with emphasis on Serbia

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s, economic restructuring and the farm crisis have reduced rural communities' economic opportunities. These changes have limited rural communities' economic development options, making older development strategies less viable and forcing many to look for nontraditional ways to sustain themselves. One of the most popular nontraditional rural development strategies has been tourism and its associated entrepreneurship opportunities because of tourism's ability to bring in dollars and to generate jobs and support retail growth. Rural tourism can be an important instrument of economic development of Serbia. Mountain areas are very attractive to tourists, especially because of the advantages offered by combining the rural environment, history, ethnic, and geographic characteristics. Rural landscape, natural environment, traditional and cultural values are important preconditions for the creation of a competitive tourist attractions.

Keywords: Rural tourism, promotion of rural tourism, integrated rural tourism, Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that rural area according to Milenković and Utvić [3] in many countries is the stabilizer of environmental elements that are valuable tourist attraction, people began in the 19th century that it developed the facilities for guests through the summer houses, holiday homes of wealthy and sanatoria, which are mostly used goat's milk in the treatment of

specific patients and motels (for example, “han”) for rest and refreshment of passengers passer. For this reason, tourism in rural areas, particularly Europe, began to grow into an organized economic activity and benefit of tourists, local community and local residents 70 years of the last century. Milenković and Utvić [3] citing research Hrabrovski Tomić [4] indicate that “in many countries, EU Rural tourism from the 1970s is considered a strategy of development of regions and rural areas, which has a very good chance, and that helps in keeping the population in the area, creating new jobs, and ultimately contributes to the socio-economic remaining areas of progress”. “Since that time, and until 1986, rural tourism has matured and became more complex category of interest to all levels of socio-economic development. Already in 1994, year authors have begun to observe the development of tourism in rural areas, as a new challenge to the successful shaping of economic physiognomy of this range and, thus, laid the theoretical foundations of transforming attitudes in practical realization of rural tourism” [1].

Specialized studies, realized by Tourism World Organization, had identified the key megatrends in tourism for 2020: (1) increasing the number of tourists concerned about environmental issues; (2) increasing demand for new destinations; (3) increasing the number of shorter vacations; (4) increasing number of older people that are more active and willing to travel; (5) becoming more experienced and sophisticated travelers, that are expecting high quality attractions, facilities and services as appropriate tariffs and quality in their travels. In this framework rural space is the perfect destination for developing rural tourism, cultural tourism and tourism in protected areas (ecotourism, adventure tourism, tourism in wild areas and camping). This trend indicates an increase in demand for rural tourism, especially for ecotourism, and its transformation from a niche market into a main segment [5].

Rural tourism in Serbia must become `main` industry` and a generator of sleeping national economy. The main benefits belong to the rural households. Tourist agencies must be engaged in enabling a dialogue between their employees and local representatives. Clients must not only be observers but also critics in the spirit of trust and transparency. A full and true comprehension of the rural tourism role is realized through revealing habits of the host, traditional values rooted in the existing culture, establishment of relations amongst population at the local level. Serbia has favorable conditions for developing rural tourism. It has, in the first place, preserved nature, mild climate, clean air, unpolluted rivers and lakes, rich flora and fauna [6].

2. RESULT AND THEIR GENERALIZATION

Both eulogized and reviled as a development option, rural tourism is increasingly viewed as a panacea, increasing the economic viability of marginalized areas, stimulating social regeneration and improving the living conditions of rural communities. Less developed countries, afflicted by debilitating rural poverty, have considerable potential in attracting tourists in search of new, authentic experiences in areas of unexploited natural and cultural riches. Meaningful community participation, together with public sector support, presents opportunities for the development of small-scale indigenous tourism projects in less developed areas [7].

Nevertheless, the scale of the tourism that is promoted in rural areas is diverse and varies in nature. The promotion of rural tourism according to Liu [8] is a derivative of

political will, because of the perceived need to reduce disparities between urban and rural areas. The preparation of rural tourism plans is often preoccupied with catchphrases of special relevance to economic gains but less emphasis is being placed on the capacity of individual communities to bring about a better future. The lack of an adequate capacity and an understanding of tourism culture by the peasantry is a common problem found elsewhere in rural tourism development cases internationally for example, in UK as documented by Davies and Gilbert [9] and Alexander & McKenna [10]; in Israel as reported by Reichel et al [11]; and in South Africa [12]”.

For example, according to Molera and Albaladejo [13] citing researchers Countryside Commission [14], ETB [15], Thibal [16], Kieselbach and Long [17], Gannon [18], OECD [19] it has been estimated that rural tourism in England generates about 9 billion annually. More specifically, the development of rural tourism offers potential solutions to many of the problems facing rural areas. These may be summarized as: Economic growth, diversification and stabilization through employment creation in both new (tourism related) and existing businesses, trades and crafts; opportunities for income growth through pluriactivity; the creation of new markets for agricultural products; and, a broadening of a region’s economic base. Socio-cultural development, including the re-population of rural areas; the maintenance and improvement of public services; the revitalization of loc crafts, customs and cultural identities; and, increased opportunities for social contact and exchange. Protection and improvement of both the natural and built are environment and infrastructure.

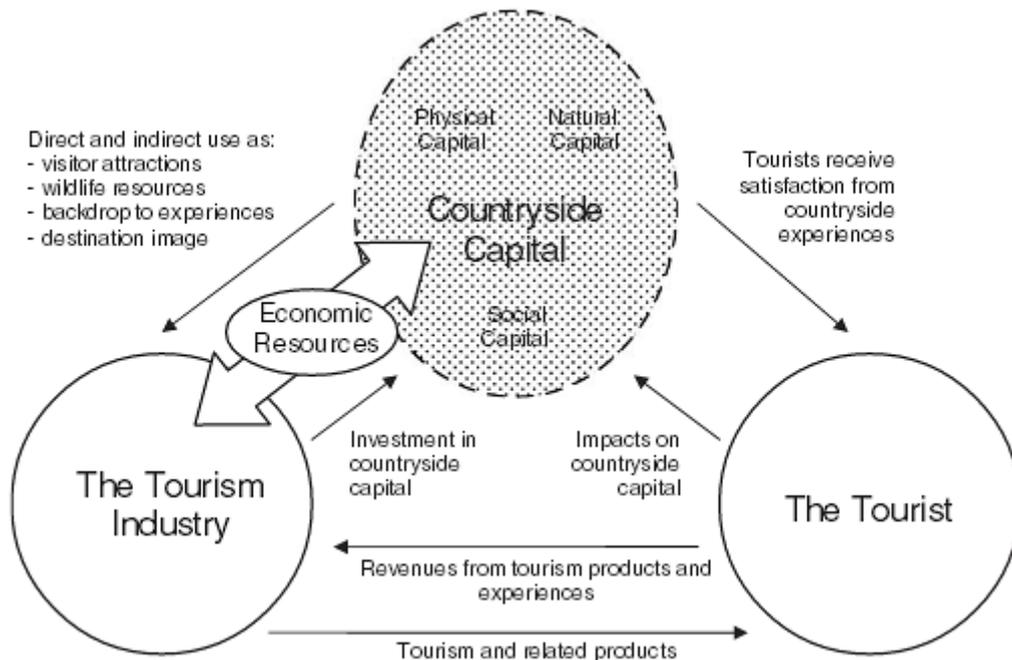


Figure 1. A model of the interactions between rural tourism and countryside capital (Garrod et al [20] according to Garrod et al [21]).

Figure 1 clarifies this in the context of rural tourism. The economic resources of rural tourism are the buildings, equipment, raw materials, infrastructure, workforce, skills and knowledge, and so on, that are employed by the industry as inputs in assembling their

products. Figure 1 between countryside capital assets and the wider economic resources employed by rural industries. Also indicates that the contribution of country-side capital to the rural business may be direct or indirect. Attracting tourists, satisfying their expectations and, perhaps most importantly, encouraging them to return in the future, are all vital elements of successful rural tourism. Countryside capital has an indirect role to play in supporting all of these activities.

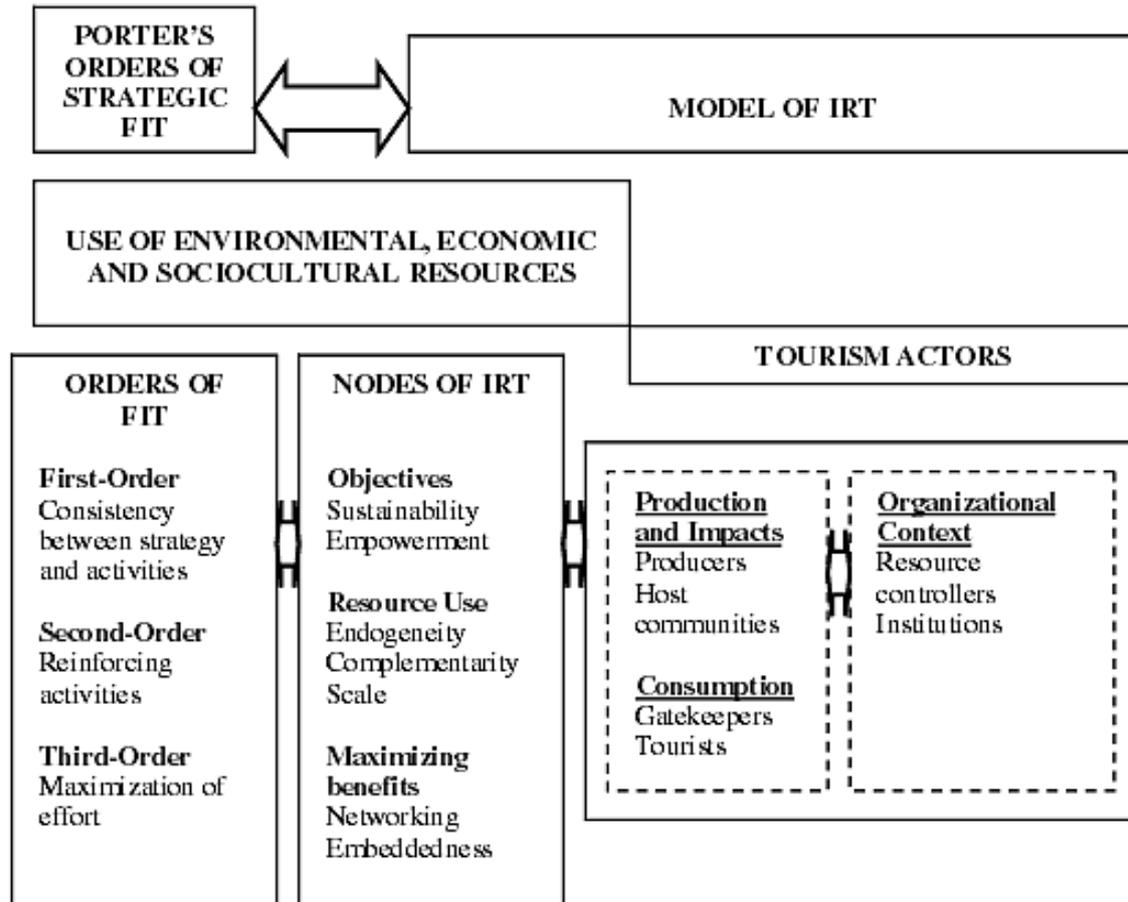


Figure 2. Model of Integrated Rural Tourism and Links with Strategic Fit (Cawley and Gillmor [22]).

IRT according to Cawley and Gillmor [22] citing researchers Day [23], Inskip [24], Mitchell and Eagles [25], Pearce [26], Weaver [27], Butler [28], Saarinen[29], Butler [30], Halme [31], Unwin [32], Bramwell and Lane [33], Johannesson [34], Pforr [35], Tinsley and Lynch [36] indicates that draws on concepts relating to alternative development in emphasizing a bottom-up approach that involves local stakeholders centrally in its pursuit and that is based on local physical, economic, social, and cultural resources. It incorporates principles of sustainability that are designed to make optimal use of resources while at the same time protecting and enhancing them. IRT advocates inter sectoral linkages and recognizes the role of collaboration among stakeholders.

Seven features are identified here as being characteristic of integration in the domain of rural tourism: an ethos of promoting multidimensional sustainability, the empowerment of local people, endogenous ownership and resource use, complementarily to other economic sectors and activities, an appropriate scale of development, networking among stakeholders, and embeddedness in local systems.

Resources potentials of rural areas (84 % territory, 53 % population, landscapes, hospitality and richness of different traditional customs of life and work in village, village architecture, churches and monasteries, rural manifestation...) and market in competitiveness of 60 % of farm (with up to 3 ha of land) steer to possibility and need of faster development non-agrarian activities in Serbian villages - among which village tourism has the greatest economic potential and significance. Serbia dispose of natural beauty and hospitable hosts, but is still missing satisfactory infrastructure for arrival in villages (roads, sign post, info- centers, ...), marketing of village tourism and specialized households in greater number that meet these demanding touristic services. Greater involvement of economy and secondary activities, village tourism can become generator of touristic and total economy growth in Serbian rural area [37].

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the rural tourism of the Republic of Serbia.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Geographic and tourist location Preserved natural resources and rural landscapes Biodiversity Geothermal springs, lakes, rivers, forests The rich cultural and historical heritage Traditional rural hospitality	Lack of financial resources for investments Underdeveloped infrastructure Migration of populations from rural areas Unfavorable educational and age structure The isolation and rural poverty Undeveloped and undiversified rural economy Inadequate production in terms of quality and volume Inadequate waste treatment Insufficient economic integration
Opportunities	Threats
Sustainable use of natural resources Economic diversification Development of small and medium-sized enterprises Horizontal and vertical integration in tourism The production and use of renewable energy	Competition in the domestic and international markets Low purchasing power of the local population Changes in trends and consumer demand Socio-economic and political instability Climate changes Inadequate use of natural resources

Organic and traditionally prepared food Autochthonous products with protected origin EU pre-accession funds Cross-border cooperation projects	International standards of service quality Lack of skilled labor Insufficient availability of financial resources
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Source: Đenadić et al [38].

For the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of rural tourism of the Republic of Serbia, as well as opportunities and threats in the environment, the SWOT analysis is used (Table 1). Based on this analysis, it is noticed that the weakness of rural areas are more numerous and stronger in effect in comparison to the comparative advantages and that in the coming period, environmental factors will pose at the same time significant opportunities, but also a threat to the sustainable development of rural tourism in Serbia. In order to utilize the full potential of rural tourism and to create a sustainable, competitive tourist product of rural tourism, it is necessary to conduct market survey, as well as survey of needs, motives and preferences of consumers (tourists). On the basis of these information and taking into account available resources, rural tourism can be developed appropriately [38].

Diversification of economic activities enables removal and resolving of numerous issues in rural areas. An important contribution to diversification of activities is stimulation of overall economic growth in rural areas, as well as improvement in the quality of living, and the quality of products and services in rural areas. The necessity for creation of adequate capabilities for diversification of rural economy was recognized in many strategic documents and programs in Serbia. In the light of Serbia joining EU, most important duties that need to be carried out in the next period are restructuring of economic environment, building of institutional and administrative mechanisms for creation and putting into effect strategies and programs for development from national to local level, strengthening of horizontal and vertical connection between all participants and strengthening their existing links and cooperation [39].

It is evident that tourism and its complementary entrepreneurship initiatives have become one of the most popular development strategies of the rural area [40-42]. The assumptions favoring tourism as a development strategy of rural areas according to Štros et al [43] citing researcher Wilson et al [44] indicates that: rural tourism can exist with cooperation from local self-government and small and medium enterprises without the need for large companies and corporations; rural tourism can be developed with relatively small capital and knowledge investment, resulting in decreasing the operating costs; rural tourism opens possibilities for small and medium enterprises whose business would not otherwise be possible in the rural area, especially entrepreneurs offering accommodation services, shops, recreation objects and other infrastructure necessary for successful business in rural tourism – existing farms generate secondary income.

3. CONCLUSIONS

According to Lo et al [45] citing researchers Ghaderi and Henderson [46], Nunkoo and Gursoy [47], Wearing and Neil [48], Dimitrovski et al [49], Schmitt [50], Davis and Morais

[51], indicates that is rural tourism defined as tourism which takes place in rural areas where it has low population densities and hence created an impression of space. Rural tourism is found to have brought benefits to the local communities in terms of their economic growth, social cultural aspect, services, standard of living and these have built up positive attitudes and behavior of the local communities towards tourism development. Past studies have revealed that, rural tourism has been actively promoted in most of the countries without an overall effective strategy and proper planning with the stakeholders. Tourism industry players normally constitutes of small enterprises own by local families, lodge owners, tour guides who are directly involved in providing services to the tourists. It is evidenced that to secure loyal customers, it is crucial to ensure that customers must be satisfied and have a wonderful experience during their visits. Past researchers have posited that industry players in rural tourism have not developed a strategic plan to ensure sustainability of the services that they have provided for the tourists.

As far as rural tourism in Serbia according to Vuković et al [52] emphasize that Since 2008 Government of the Republic of Serbia, basically the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Works give support for rural tourism development. Also, with incentives Government support the expansion and improvement of economic activities in rural areas such as: (1) Construction and renovation of buildings modeled unauthentic farmhouse "salaši", "vajati" and other objects; (2) Restoration of authentic buildings in the countryside -mills, wine cellars, cloth watermills, and the like. Procurement of equipment for the enrichment of content on offer rural tourism, promotion of rural tourism, events that foster women's associations in rural areas, as well as activities that are focused on women's employment in rural areas; (3) Procurement of raw materials and equipment necessary for the maintenance of the old traditional crafts, arts, different farm skills and activities, (4) Different forms of tourism can develop complementary with rural tourism, such as, for example, tourism, events, hunting and fishing tourism, special interest tourism and they will together represent an opportunity to improve the overall economic and social state in rural areas. However, the development of tourism must not be left to chance, and to local ingenuity farmers. It must be the subject of serious analysis and planning at all levels.

In conclusion, the program "European Rural Tourism Network" organized by Eulogies in collaboration with 12 organizers of rural tourism in 9 European countries and EUROTER. This project involves three elements: technical assistance for the development of chain of tourist lodgings in Germany, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Czech Republic and Romanian. In addition, it assures knowledge of the European rural tourism market and assists in the creation of a program for information and promotion of accommodation in each country. The activities of the Federation propose sending experts in these countries, training those who guarantee the tourist activity of the villages and of the owners of farms and guesthouses. This project contributes to maintaining rural life in Europe and also assists countries in Eastern Europe and Central Europe in their rural development efforts [53].

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