

STRATEGIC POSITIONING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN SERBIA

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Abstract

Protected nature and the environment in the rural area has always attracted a large number of urban population, which is why the interest in traveling to the village increases. According to statistical data, rural tourism in Serbia participates with 15-25 % in all forms of tourist activities, which tells us that "the story of rural tourism started in the rural area and that in the future it will achieve ever greater success". Rural tourism is an important instrument for the economic development of mountainous, but also other rural areas. These areas are attractive to tourists because of the advantages of the rural environment itself with historical and cultural traditions, ethnic and geographical characteristics. As a strategy for sustainable local development, in most European countries, rural population increasingly accepts the development of rural tourism as a new form of opportunity for additional financial gain in addition to the basic agribusiness. The development of rural tourism in Serbia occurs gradually, either as a result of engaging local entrepreneurs or developing companies whose main task is attracting tourists, or as a result of tourist activities that reveal that this area attracts visitors' attention to the activity that local entrepreneurs will respond to. Rural areas are unique due to their spatial and socio-cultural identities. The return to traditional and typical values and authenticity as well as diverse experiences, adventures and deeper insights into the emergence of new tourism products with new environmental, natural and social parameters, call for an understanding of the relationships that people share with natural characteristics and phenomena around them.

Determining the economic effects of rural tourism development as well as the quality of service and supply are some of the objectives of this research, with the possibility of sustainability of rural settlements and tourism development.

Keywords: rural tourism, positioning strategy, product quality, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Protected nature and the environment in the rural area has always attracted, and in recent times and especially attracted, a large number of urban population, which is why the interest in traveling to the village increases. According to statistical data showing that rural tourism participates with 10-25% in all forms of tourism activities, it can be concluded that "the story of rural tourism started in the rural area and that in the future will achieve an ever-increasing rise", rural tourism is an important instrument economic development of rural areas. These areas are attractive to tourists because of the advantages of the rural environment itself with the historical tradition and all their ethnic and geographical characteristics.

In most European countries, the rural population increasingly accepts the development of tourism as a strategy for sustainable local development (Petrić, 2006). Rural tourism development occurs gradually in many areas, either as a result of engaging local entrepreneurs or developing firms whose primary task is to attract tourists, or as a result of tourist activities that reveal that this area attracts visitors' attention to the activity that local entrepreneurs will respond to. The development of tourism in the rural area is not only a matter of matching tourist requirements with local offers, but also the issue of evaluating the local benefits itself. Rural areas are unique due to their spatial and socio-cultural identities. What is important is that adequate rural development practices call for an understanding of the relationships that people share with natural characteristics and phenomena around them (Chigbu, 2014).

Determining the economic effects of rural tourism development as well as the economic development of the local community are some of the objectives of this research, with the possibility of sustainability of rural settlements and tourism development. If special attention is paid to the education of the local population in order to improve the quality of services, (Stepanov, 2016), with the tendency of increasing the number of tourists, conditions will be created for better comfort for rural settlements where the local population has economic and other motives to continue living in the countryside. This causes a return to traditional and typical values and authenticity as well as diverse experiences, adventures and deeper insights into new tourism products with new environmental, natural and social parameters (Krivošijev, 2014). In modern tourism, the goal of each tourist destination is to create a unique identity, that is, a difference in relation to competition, which will be the basis for growth and development in the competitive market.

Tourism can in general be viewed as an inherent process of change, because the proper understanding of this process allows the dynamics of tourism development, as well as the identification of the main factors that influence changes in tourism development and the selection of appropriate strategies that, in turn, influence the identification and assessment of planning strategic directions for the development of rural tourism (Streimikiene et al. 2015). For the selection of strategic directions, for the purpose of strategic positioning of rural tourism on the tourist map of the region, it is necessary to look at the economic importance of the development of specific regions as well as the potential of the heritage of these regions. Such an approach to the development of rural tourism is the basis for the development of a quality tourist offer as well as placement on the tourism market (Cole, 2004). Rural tourism is an effective way of presenting and preserving the objects of natural and cultural heritage, landscape, tradition and customs (Daugstad, 2008). This research seeks to position rural tourism in Serbia in order to detect problems and resources, and at the same time make proposals for their improvement.

The strategic positioning of the sustainable development of rural tourism is the creation of conditions and the creation of strategies, primarily by the local community, in order to form the basis on which the sustainable development of rural tourism of a particular rural area will be based. The theoretical definition of the subject of the research includes the categorical term of the strategic positioning as a means to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage of tourist destinations and sustainable development, which implies balanced economic, social and cultural development without endangering the

environment and rural tourism, whose positioning would reveal problems and resources at that destination, and at the same time made proposals for their improvement.

1. TOURIST DESTINATION POSITION STRATEGY

Despite the strong natural and cultural determinants of the Serbian village, the existing competition in rural tourism is extremely strong, both in rural activities and in accommodation. The surrounding countries also offer a large number of natural and cultural activities, however, there is no strong differentiation of accommodation capacities between competitors (Master plan for sustainable development of rural tourism in Serbia, 2011, 82).

Businesses, whose main activity is tourism, are increasingly faced with turbulent and complex environments, and for this reason they accept and practice strategic management. Strategic management is, in fact, a change management that includes a system of corporate values, a corporate culture, and a change management process (Čerović, 2009). Basically, the main task is to provide tourism service providers with a rational and timely response to changes in the environment in which they conduct their business activity, which includes strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategic implementation and control. The process is viewed as an integrative and continuous process that includes:

- An analysis of the environment,
- Planning directions,
- Strategy planning,
- Implementation of strategy and
- Strategic control.

The strategy for the positioning of rural tourism in Serbia should focus on the following: the development of instruments for pre-accession assistance where the material aspects, non-material aspects, rural activities and rural accommodation capacities are combined, while at the same time developing the true Serbian character of these aspects, creating a destination that reflects the authenticity and soul of the Serbian village throughout the territory, creating a destination based on the principles of ecological, social and economic sustainability, creation of an integrated and holistic offer in rural tourism that combines rural activities with rural accommodation capacities in an innovative, economic, social and ecologically sustainable way, the construction of a highly competitive rural tourism in Serbia, focusing on the holistic positioning of rural tourism, which enables Serbia to become more competitive.

Authentic rural tourism reflects the essence of the Serbian soul, so the strategy for positioning a tourist destination involves combining physical elements with spiritual elements. Consequently, it would also be an invitation for tourists and visitors to come and go to personally discover the soul of the Serbian people, explore the cultural heritage and discover the uninvited beauty of the Serbian village. These physical and spiritual elements need to be developed in the context of the strategy for rural accommodation capacities and rural activities (Master plan, 2011, 82).

The positioning of tourist destinations, as well as the creation of mental images and association with the destination, often use certain rural symbols. Their purpose is to reinforce and illustrate rural tourism, where its very essence would be more tangible. These symbols combine rural activities and rural accommodation. One example of rural symbols is shown in Picture 1.

Picture 1: **The symbol of rural tourism in Serbia**



Source: Authors

Some villages that managed to survive their way of life and living began to look more like cities. By converting the authentic values of the village into tourist values, the villages could open up to tourism trends that would differ significantly from the current tourist trends in terms of volume and quality. These movements would bring dynamics into a uniform rural life, stabilize the further layering of the village, and open wide opportunities for employment of the rural population, as well as the acquisition of additional income (Štetić 2004, 146).

The culture of the Serbian village represents a certain factor of the attractiveness of the rural tourism offer, which includes (Cvijanović, 2014):

- A culture of dressing,
- A culture of living,
- Spiritual culture (Folklore, traditional and contemporary creativity in the countryside).

Despite the general consensus that good positioning of tourism can be successfully used as a powerful tool for the economic development of communities in rural areas and for improving their well-being, the fact is that a positive contribution, based on the development of tourism of many developing countries, especially at the local level, is still not accepted enough (Anderson, 2013). Therefore, the proper positioning of tourism products is necessary, which would result in better business results for tourism service providers, since the valorization of each product is a requirement for efficiency and effectiveness in business, and the benefit of the state and the local community through

additional income and higher employment. The positioning of tourism products influences the awareness of potential consumers (service users) in order to develop a positive image of a particular product (destination), where potential consumers become loyal consumers, that is, service users. Positioning gives a realistic picture to consumers and service users where a particular product is in relation to the product of competition lists the ten main rules for the positioning of products and services (Robertson, 2005):

- Establish a definition of positioning,
- The position must be simple,
- The position must be unique,
- Establish the advantage of the product according to the needs of the market,
- Build a credible position,
- Provide strong support for quick start,
- Monitor the dynamics of the market,
- Make a position that is visible in all communications,
- Quantify alternative positioning options and
- Do not test the position statement.

For successful positioning, it is necessary to understand consumer behavior (customer service). By researching the habits of consumers, their desires and needs, the necessary information can be obtained that will be used in the development of a strategy for performance in a particular market or a market segment (Ćirić et al. 2013). Research shows that the demand for products and services is influenced by the level of income, prices, quality of products and services (Stepanov, 2016), as well as information and habits of consumers. These are, in fact, the basic aspects that need to be addressed when developing the positioning strategy, because the market game is becoming more and more complicated, and therefore positioning itself as an inevitable need for achieving business success.

A tourist destination after taking a favorable position on the tourist map of the region can acquire new customers (visitors), but it can also lose a certain group of visitors whose habits were to enjoy at a destination whose brand was previous, old style. In this case, re-positioning is necessary, by introducing other acceptable styles. In the process of re-positioning, it is necessary to take strict care of changes in order to keep the destination of the existing brand without losing the gained confidence of the gay visitors (Karadeniz, 2009).

Strategic positioning of tourist destinations, as a special market segment, can be defined as putting the destination in the order of a reference frame in the market segment of tourism products. Such positioning attempts to gain new positions in consumer awareness where superiority in relation to competition is developing. This is especially important when high-competitive conditions are present and when certain market barriers are present. However, positioning did not cause the creation of an image of a destination, but it is, in fact, a way of communicating between destination and consumers with the intention of influencing decisions on a potential trip. Such an effect has a cause-effect relationship between destination and consumer, and the ultimate outcome is the choice of the right destination by consumers (tourists). For such a complex process it is necessary to analyze all the available attributes of a particular destination. Therefore, the choice of a positioning strategy that would create a positive image and the desire of

tourists to stay at that destination, is a basic precondition for the proper strategy of performing on a particular market (Štetić, 2003). The strategic adaptation of Serbian tourism to market changes, and in accordance with the strategic goals of the development of tourist destinations, requires the identification of priority types of tourism, which includes rural tourism (Čerović, 2009). In order to implement it, it is necessary to look at the following:

- The basic directions of tourism development in the world,
- Long-term goals of tourism development in Serbia (especially those related to entering the international market),
- Achieve the level of development and service quality,
- Resource templates and other factors.

Any potential tourist destination in the offer can have good tourism products and a solid tourist service, however, if it is not able to change the perception of consumers by offering them something that is different, more interesting and more attractive than other destinations, it will not have the ability to persuade potential tourists to visits to this destination.

2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Relative to the world's tourist trends, Serbia is a relatively new destination that through the development strategy seeks to take advantage of a favorable place in the tourism market. There are good opportunities for the development of tourism, which should be directed in the right direction for several reasons: Using good and bad experiences from other countries, Market positioning in accordance with the latest trends, Utilization of inherited tourism infrastructure and tourist organization, Utilizing a critical mass of knowledge and Internet capabilities for a quick entry into international tourism competition.

The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, contains a description of the development instruments of the competitor countries, a description of the current situation in tourism in the Republic of Serbia, possibilities for tourism development in the Republic of Serbia in relation to current trends in world tourism, strategic tourism positioning of the Republic of Serbia and strategic advantages and disadvantages of tourism , the goals of tourism development in the Republic of Serbia, the vision of tourism in the Republic of Serbia, the choice of priority Serbian tourist products, the tourist structuring of the Republic of Serbia, the model of growth, the preconditions for and an effective policy of tourism development of the Republic of Serbia, a competitiveness plan, an investment strategy and a plan of necessary investments and a marketing plan.

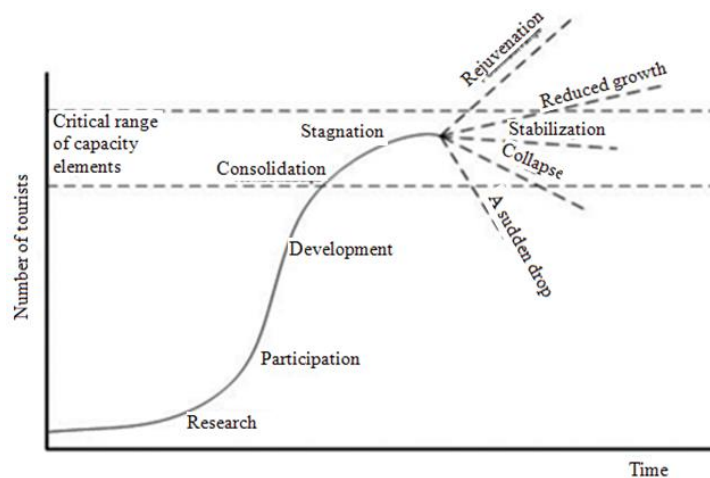
Real opportunities for tourism development of the Republic of Serbia derive from (Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2006, 3):

- The global turn of tourism development according to the principle of accelerated entry into the tourist map of a larger number of smaller destinations;
- Potentials of tourism products;

- Changing the profile of tourists;
- General market growth.

However, tourism trends in our country and in the world have influenced various factors such as: development of means of transportation, scientific and technical achievements, increase of the level of culture, education, etc. Historically, the difference between old tourism, characterized by mass tourism trends and new tourism characterized by new conditions contained in the changed demands and expectations of tourists, as their behavior, is shown in the following figure as a life cycle of tourism.

Picture 2: **Model of the evolutionary cycle of a tourist destination**



Source: Weaver, D., Lowton, L. (2006), *Tourism Management*, John Wiley and Sons, Milton.

The only question is the clear determination and readiness of the Republic of Serbia to take advantage of opportunities in tourism, as well as the issue of professional determination on which products and markets should be paid attention.

In order to successfully position Serbia, as a relevant destination in the international tourist market, it is necessary to form tourist clusters, which is also envisaged in the strategy of tourism development of the Republic of Serbia.

Situation in rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia

In order to improve the quality of life, as well as the standards of the rural population of the Republic of Serbia, new rural development policies must be implemented to ensure coordination of the development of agriculture and other activities in rural areas, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Rural tourism has already been developed in some parts of Serbia, and the place it occupies on the list does not attract either the resources at its disposal by any geographical position. It is known that the existence of natural and anthropogenic resources is not a sufficient condition for tourism competitiveness. Bearing in mind the resources for the development of rural tourism owned by the Republic of Serbia, it can be said that more than 80% of the

territory of Serbia consists of rural areas, that about 50% of the population lives in rural areas, that Serbia is multiethnic, that is, that it lives more than 30 nations and nationalities, etc. This is a clear potential that rural areas could have in the future development of tourism. Additionally, local strategies for the development of certain municipalities in which tourism development should be especially emphasized should be added. There is already increased awareness in society as well as interest in the development of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia.

There are currently no official data on accommodation in Serbian villages, but according to the Tourist Organization of Serbia, the rural accommodation capacity amounts to more than 10,000 beds, while the number of overnight stays in rural tourism is about 6% of the total number of overnight stays in Serbia (<http://www.selo.co.rs>). A large number of overnight stays are unregistered, and a large number of visits to rural areas take place daily without overnight stays, and deficiencies in the future would have to be eliminated due to a clearly proclaimed position that tourism is one of the perspectives of the Serbian economy. The following table shows the current accommodation offer in the Republic of Serbia.

Table 1: **Rural housing capacities of the Republic of Serbia**

| | Type of object | Number |
|-----|------------------------|--------|
| 1. | Apartments | 40 |
| 2. | Cribs | 23 |
| 3. | Ethno village | 15 |
| 4. | Appartamenti esclusivi | 4 |
| 5. | Hotels in the village | 2 |
| 6. | Country house | 12 |
| 7. | Case nel villaggio | 320 |
| 8. | Residenze | 3 |
| 9. | Farms | 11 |
| 10. | Cottages | 23 |
| 11. | Exclusive Villas | 32 |

Source: (<http://www.selo.co.rs>).

What is characteristic of the rural tourism offer of the Republic of Serbia is that there is no single integrated offer. This has prevented marketing approach to development both at the level of rural tourist destinations and at the state level (Cvijanović, 2014). In the coming period, this should be taken into account. The unique market performance has not been built so far and thus has made it impossible to position the Republic of Serbia in the tourism market.

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM – OF KEY DIMENSIONS

Rural areas still represent a significant part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia - 80%. and there is still a large part of the Serbian population living there - 42%, (<http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs>). That is why the issue of rural development and the well-being of the rural population is one of the main issues of the overall sustainable development of the Republic of Serbia. Rural areas are seriously faced with a number of problems, such as strong depopulation, economic underdevelopment, rising poverty and generally unfavorable living conditions. In the last few decades, rural tourism, as well as commercial tourism, has been followed by many environmental, social and cultural unwanted consequences, and hence the need for this activity to be framed by the concepts of sustainable development. Although the modern world is confronted with responsibility and awareness that the planet must be preserved both for present and future generations, it is necessary to reconcile people's needs with the preservation of nature, because it is the obligation of today's generations to leave offspring at least to the extent possible. Sustainable tourism means an economy that has a minimal impact on local culture and the environment, where it also promotes the creation of new jobs, the acquisition of adequate salaries and the protection of ecosystems (<http://www.logos.org.rs>). There is no unique definition of the sustainable development of rural tourism, however, it can be said that the sustainable development of rural tourism respects the general principles of sustainable development and ethical changes among all participants in the tourism process. Although the concern for sustainable development is regularly portrayed as the basis for modern planning and management of tourist destinations, the question of how much it is applied in practice is regularly asked (Ruhanan, 2012). In 2002, Serbia presented sustainable tourism in Johannesburg as an example of sustainable development, that is, tourism presented on the concept of sustainable development. The goal of the program is to develop a legal and political framework to support the rural economy's diversification through tourism and contribute to achieving the millennium development goals at the national level, to better connectivity and organization of rural tourism by improving the capacity of local actors to deliver services as well as production in accordance with the national strategy at the local level. Key actions aimed at achieving these goals are (Živković, 2013):

- The Role of the National Master Plan for the Development of Rural Tourism and the National Program for Rural Development,
- Providing guidelines for public investments with the aim of creating national and international partnerships between the public, civil and state sectors,
- Strengthening the capacity of entrepreneurs in rural tourism, as well as the capacity of tourist organizations and citizens' associations,
- Promotion of an innovative approach to development through local agency groups and tourist organizations and providing special support to local projects through a joint UN program for sustainable tourism and rural development.

The concept of sustainable development (Petroman et al. 2010), has emerged as a way of solving the ecological crisis caused by the industrial exploitation of environmental resources and the continuous decline of its quality, but has been enriched mainly by the economic and social dimension, although it also mentions the cultural dimension of sustainable development.

Special attention in the concept of sustainable development of rural tourism is dedicated to activating women and vulnerable categories of society in encouraging their participation in rural tourism, especially in the production of local handicrafts and in traditional methods of production, then revitalizing rural schools and stimulating active learning and learning in nature for children and youth, as well as facilitating access to the market for local agricultural products, especially those originating from small agricultural holdings (Butler, 1999). According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism means such a development of tourism that respects and meets the needs of tourists, without compromising the ability to achieve these objectives in the future. The concept of sustainable development of rural tourism is a basic guideline in the management of tourism activity, which will enable realization of economic and social goals, as well as key ecological processes and biodiversity. Sustainable rural tourism development, based on an integrated approach, imposes equally emphasis on the following components (Jovičić, 2000):

- Preserving the environment,
- Affirmation of social integrity,
- Fostering the cultural characteristics of the local population,
- Optimum satisfaction of tourist needs and
- Achieve economic profit.

The basis for carrying out the mentioned activity is, of course, the quality of the environment, social integrity and the cultural identity of rural areas. By acknowledging the concept of sustainable development, a great contribution is made to their affirmation, meeting the economic criteria and the needs of tourists. Bearing in mind the mentioned facts, it can even be said that sustainable rural tourism is an integral and complex development of tourism that simultaneously ensures the achievement of heterogeneous goals, where no one should be dominant in relation to others (Jovičić, 2000).

Although it has already been noted that the unique definition of the concept of sustainable tourism does not officially exist, a number of different definitions can be found in various works (Butler, 1999). Thus, in many of these definitions there is a strong emphasis on one of the three dimensions mentioned, that is, on the ecological dimension, but the conceptual domain is expanded by the addition of a cultural and political dimension (Bramwell et al. 1996). The basic dimensions of tourism sustainability are: Ecological sustainability, Social, Cultural, Economic sustainability.

The economic effects of the consumption of tourists on the economy of specific areas have direct or indirect effects. The direct impacts of rural tourism on the economy are the most important (Maksimovic et al. 2015):

- Influence on social product and national income;
- Impact on the development of economic activities constituting the tourism economy;
- Impact on the balance of payments;
- Impact on the employment of the population and the level of living standards;
- Influence on investment activity and structure of investments;
- Impact on the faster development of underdeveloped countries and areas.

In addition to direct attention, the indirect impact of rural tourism on the economy deserves considerable attention. Consumption of tourists directly realized through the activity of a tourist economy more or less certainly affects all economic and non-economic activities. This creates new jobs that automatically reduce unemployment, which is identified as one of the most prominent benefits of rural tourism.

In order to achieve economic goals, it is necessary to strive to provide high-quality tourism services, as this ensures optimal satisfaction of the needs of domestic and foreign tourists on the one hand, and the achievement of favorable economic results of the participants in satisfying tourist needs on the other (Muhi, 2013). Given that in modern tourism the goal of each tourist destination is to create a unique identity, that is, a difference in relation to competition, it will precisely this will be the basis for the growth and development of a tourist destination in the competitive market. Therefore, a "package" of tourist services has gained special importance lately. For such a unique service, travel agencies and other organizations that appear as bidders of a service package form a unique selling price (Bosković, 2009). The cultural sustainability of rural tourism has recently been a mutual dependence between tourism and cultural heritage. According to the Council of Europe recommendation on promotion of tourism in order to promote cultural heritage as a factor of sustainable development, it is necessary to include urban and rural cultural areas that point to the interaction of man and nature and show the development of the human community and settlements over time. The tourist and cultural offer does not only cover the offer for tourists, but also the local population, who, perhaps even before others, needs to become familiar with their cultural potentials in order to better understand them and respect them more, because, on the one hand, a new framework for the dynamic cultural life of the local population, and on the other, an attractive tourist and cultural offer of the city and the village, which can attract tourists to better know their personal cultural potentials (Dojčinović, 2005). One of the basis for the development of rural tourism in certain regions is, of course, cultural heritage, which occupies one of the most important places in the basis of tourism itself. Tourism can help preserve autochthonous cultures, as well as other cultural relics, increase the importance of rural economy and generate resources that make preservation of cultural heritage possible (<http://www.iccl.org>).

The development of rural tourism can significantly contribute to the preservation of the local community, but it can also become a threat to the cultural heritage of the community, helping to preserve the community, but also to threaten the cultural heritage of these communities.

The negative social and cultural impacts of rural tourism are reflected through (<http://www.uneptie.org>):

- Change or loss of autochthonous identities and values,
- Cultural conflicts - "they or we",
- Ethical issues (crime, children workers, prostitution and "sex tourism").

The positive socio-cultural influences of rural tourism are (<http://www.uneptie.org>):

- The unique force for establishing peace and better tolerance,
- Strengthening the community,
- Reevaluation of culture and tradition,

- Creating more social equity,
- Encouraging civic engagement and patriotism.

An image of cultural sustainability is reflected in the understanding of the intercultural difference of global, international business. This dimension is very important for sustainability only and implies an optimal model of organizational culture adapted to national culture (Miletić et al. 2015).

CONCLUSION

Tourism has become a global phenomenon in the past. The development of tourism, especially taking into account his opinion on the number of participants in domestic and international tourist traffic, and the development of the overall tourist offer contributed to tourism being "seen" as a phenomenon that does not recognize boundaries, which break barriers of a different character, and which implies integration the efforts of many participants towards the formation of an integrated tourism product. For the last 40 years, tourist trips have gained massiveness. For many countries, tourism has become one of the leading industries, strategically important, especially when it comes to employment, the impact on the balance of payments and many other influences that tourism has in the economic and social domain. Using research and analysis of foreign and domestic literature (desk research), in comparison with the knowledge we came up with on the basis of domestic practice in the development of tourism development strategies in Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (field research) , we can confirm with certainty that this paper confirmed the initial (general) hypothesis that the application of the concept of strategic management and its instruments in tourist destinations can significantly improve the value and competitive advantage for users of tourist services at different levels of tourist destinations.

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STRATEGIJSKO POZICIONIRANJE ODRŽIVOGA RAZVOJA RURALNOGA TURIZMA U SRBIJI

Sažetak

Zaštićena priroda i okoliš u ruralnom području oduvijek su privlačili velik broj gradskih stanovnika, zbog čega se interes za putovanje u selo povećava. Prema statističkim podacima ruralni turizam u Srbiji sudjeluje s 15-25 % u svim oblicima turističkih aktivnosti, što nam govori da je "priča o ruralnom turizmu započela na ruralnom području i da će u budućnosti postizati sve veći uspjeh". Ruralni turizam je važan instrument za gospodarski razvoj planinskih, ali i drugih ruralnih područja. Ta su područja atraktivna turistima zbog prednosti same seoske sredine s povijesnim i kulturnim tradicijama, etničkim i geografskim obilježjima. Kao strategiju održivoga lokalnog razvoja, u većini europskih zemalja seosko stanovništvo sve više prihvaća razvoj ruralnoga turizma kao novi vid mogućnosti da se pored osnovnoga agrobiznisa ostvari dodatna financijska dobit. Razvoj ruralnog turizma se u Srbiji javlja postupno, bilo kao rezultat angažiranja lokalnih poduzetnika ili poduzeća u razvoju čiji je osnovni zadatak privlačenje turista, ili kao rezultat aktivnosti turista koji otkrivaju da to područje privlači pozornost posjetitelja vezanu za aktivnost na koju će lokalni poduzetnici odgovoriti. Ruralna područja jedinstvena su zbog prostornog i sociokulturnoga identiteta. Povratak na tradicionalne i tipične vrijednosti i autentičnosti kao i raznovrsne doživljaje, avanture i dublja saznanja gdje se pojavljuju novi turistički proizvodi s novim ekološkim, prirodnim i društvenim parametrima, pozivaju na razumijevanje odnosa koji ljudi dijele s prirodnim karakteristikama i pojavama oko njih.

Određivanje ekonomskoga učinka razvoja seoskoga turizma, kao i kvalitete usluge i opskrbe neki su od ciljeva istraživanja, uz mogućnost održivosti ruralnih naselja i razvoja turizma.

Glavne riječi: seoski turizam, strategija pozicioniranja, kvaliteta proizvoda, održivi razvoj.

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