

# TOURISM IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT RURAL AREAS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA<sup>1</sup>

*Predrag Vuković, Svetlana Roljević Nikolić<sup>2</sup>*

## Abstract

*Rural tourism is rapidly began to develop after World War II, primarily in Western Europe, and then realizing the benefits of practicing, in Eastern Europe and North America. Today, the rural tourism has become a global trend. The character, intensity and dynamics of the development of rural tourism are conditioned by: natural geographical characteristics of the area, anthropogenic heritage, degree of socio - economic development, level of awareness of the local population about the advantages of dealing with rural tourism, etc. Rural areas are today burdened with numerous problems (accelerated aging of the rural population, population migration to urban urban centers, decline in macroeconomic indicators, etc.). Problems are present in all rural areas of Serbia. Bearing in mind that precisely the majority of the territory of Serbia consists of rural areas (85%) and that they have 43.6% of the population (Census 2011), it is justified to address the urgent problems in these orders. Tourism has a synergic character, since it enables the connection of a large number of commercial and non-commercial activities. It allows the creation of a large number of different tourism products and thus leaves positive multiplier effects on the local environment reflected in employment growth, macroeconomic indicators, stopping negative demographic trends, etc. The paper analyzes the impact of rural tourism on rural areas. It points to the scope and dynamics of the current development and points to the trends of future development.*

**Key words:** *tourism, rural areas, development, synergy, economy.*

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<sup>2</sup> Predrag Vukovic Ph.D. Research associate, Institute of Agricultural Economics, Belgrade, Volgina 15, 11060 Belgrade, Serbia, E-mail: [predrag\\_v@iep.bg.ac.rs](mailto:predrag_v@iep.bg.ac.rs) , phone/fax +381 11 6972 – 858; Svetlana Roljevic Nikolic Ph.D. Research associate, Institute of Agriculture Economics, Belgrade, Volgina 15, 11060 Belgrade, Serbia, E-mail: [svetlana\\_r@iep.bg.ac.rs](mailto:svetlana_r@iep.bg.ac.rs) , phone/fax +381 11 6972 – 858.

## Introduction

Today, tourism has become a phenomenon that has entered in all the spheres of economic and social life. Today, there is almost no economy in the world that does not invest and does not expect any effects from investment in tourism.

The revenues generated by individual countries from tourism are such that it is one of the most profitable industries, and in a number of countries it has become a leading industry.

*Annual Report* of the World tourist Organization (UNWTO)<sup>3</sup> World tourist Organization highlights that 2016 proved to be another excellent year for international tourism despite many challenges. International tourist arrivals grew for the seventh consecutive year to reach 1.2 billion, a sequence of uninterrupted growth not recorded since the 1960s.

The strongest growth was recorded in the Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions. International tourist arrivals reached 1,235 million in 2016. 2016 saw growth in international arrivals of some 46 million, or 4% over 2015.

Tourism has grown above average, at around 4% per year, for seven straight years. 300 million more people travelled internationally for tourism between 2008 and 2016. Growth in advanced economy destinations (+5%) exceeded that of emerging economies (+2%) in 2016. Rural tourism nowadays is global trend.

European Federation of Rural Tourism (EUROGITES)<sup>4</sup> is formed by 34 professional and trade organizations from 27 countries<sup>5</sup> of geographical Europe. It represents a tourism sector with an estimate of 500.000 micro-enterprises and about 5 - 6,5 million bed places.

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<sup>3</sup> UNWTO (2016): Annual report, tourism in numbers, Madrid, web.link: [http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual\\_report\\_2016\\_web\\_0.pdf](http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/annual_report_2016_web_0.pdf) (accessed 20th December 2017 )

<sup>4</sup> [file:///C:/Users/Predrag\\_v/Downloads/EuroGites%20short%2020170103\\_EN.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Predrag_v/Downloads/EuroGites%20short%2020170103_EN.pdf) (accessed 20th December 2017)

<sup>5</sup> Member countries of EU are by 01/2017: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom Non-EU members: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland.

The product goes from the rural Bed & Breakfast and self-catering in private homes or farms, up to small family-run rural hotels or guesthouses, and related restaurant or activity tourism services. As a whole, this sector stands for about 15% of the European tourism capacity. The Republic of Serbia is a member of this organization.

### **Brief overview on state of rural areas in the Republic of Serbia**

Rural areas<sup>6</sup> cover 85% of the territory of Serbia with 55% of the population creating over 40% of the DP of Serbia (Table 1.). The population density in rural areas is 63 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and below the national average by one-third.

The population is relatively stable; in the period 1991 – 2002 it dropped by 2.5% below the national average. Considerable change has occurred when compared with historic trends in the rural population and labour force of Serbia from the 1990s (Bogdanov, N. 2007, p. 61.):

- Migration from villages to cities which, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, brought about the drop in rural population and demographic drain in villages of certain regions, was stopped or considerably slowed down;
- Reversible migrations from villages to cities which is characteristic of transitional states, were reported in Serbia as well. These processes are explained by deep economic crisis and the closing down of large industrial complexes. This led to principal growth in rural population being recorded in suburban and rural areas surrounding larger industrial centres. In addition, a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons from the territory of former Yugoslavia in 1990s also settled in rural areas.

Among the many factors explaining these demographic changes, the primary one certainly relates to workplaces closures and reduced opportunities for employment in cities. Restitution of land in the course of transition in Serbia did not greatly affect the return of population to rural areas, as was the case in other Euro-Asian transitional states (Macours, K. 2005).

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<sup>6</sup> As defined by the OECD definition of rurality

**Table 1. Main characteristic of rural areas in the Republic of Serbia**

	Serbia	Total urban	Total rural
<b>1. Geographical characteristics</b>			
Area, km <sup>2</sup> , 2004	77 508	11 556	65 952
Number of settlements, 2004	4 715	811	3 904
<b>2. Population and human development indicators</b>			
Population (Census 2002)	7 498 001	3 336 341	4 161 660
% Change in population 2002/1991	98.96	102.42	96.35
Density	97	289	63.10
In or out migration rate	1.48	3.63	- 0.14
<i>Age structure (%)</i>			
Under 15 years of age	15.69	15.10	16.17
Over 65 years of age	16.54	15.36	17.49
<i>Aging rate</i>	1.05	1.02	1.08
<i>Educational structure of population over 15 years of age (%)</i> :			
Incomplete education	21.84	14.01	28.19
Primary education	23.88	20.41	26.69
Secondary education	41.07	47.21	36.09
Higher and high education	11.03	16.05	6.95
Unknown	2.18	2.32	2.07
<b>3. Employment</b>			
<i>Employment by sectors (%)</i> :	100	100	100
Primary sector	23.36	11.25	32.98
Secondary sector	30.08	29.32	30.69
Tertiary sector (including public sector)	43.76	56.74	33.44
Unknown	2.80	2.69	2.89
<i>Total economically active population</i>	3 398 227	1 527 319	1 870 908
<i>% Of the unemployed, total</i>	22.22	23.33	21.32
Total of economically active women	1 474 242	697 866	776 376
% Unemployed women, total	24.22	25.08	23.44
Rate of activity	53.76	53.95	53.61
Rate of employment	41.81	41.36	42.18
<b>4. DP (for 2004)</b>			
DP (mill. EURO)	14 102	8 334	5 768
% Primary sector in DP	19.33	10.23	32.48
% Secondary sector	39.48	38.34	41.12
% Tertiary sector	40.79	50.99	26.06
% Public sector	0.40	0.44	0.34
% Agriculture, hunting, forestry, water manag.	16.33	7.01	29.81
DP per capita Serbia = 100%	100.00	132.82	73.69

**Source:** Bogdanov, N. (2007): "Small rural households in Serbia and Rural Non-Farm Economy", UN DP, Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, p. 62.

In the document "The Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024" (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 85/2014) it is stated that the structure of the employment of the rural population by sector has been dynamically changed over the last years. Employment in agriculture remains the largest in comparison with other sectors. In the period 2004-2012, it ranged between 43 and 50%, which is very high compared to other European countries. Only one in four or five inhabitants of rural settlements is in the industry, and all of them are less. On the other hand, the rural population is increasingly employed in the tertiary sector, which can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, by increasing the stability of jobs in the activities of this sector, and on the other hand by increasing the number of employees in the public administration, education, public utilities and social services sectors.

The income of rural households in most share (35-42%) comes from income of employment (regular and supplementary), immediately followed by the share of pensions that are very high and rising (about 30% in 2012). Agricultural income varies between 6-9% of the total available household income, which is highly defined by agricultural yields in some years. At the same time, the value of natural consumption, which is largely attributed to the consumption of food produced on agricultural holdings, is stable at the level of 12-14%. In any case, the income derived from agriculture is relatively low compared to wages from other sectors and social benefits, which is a clear indicator of low productivity of the sector.

Beside women, rural youth are also facing with high risks of exclusion from the labor market. Young people aged 15-24 years in only 21% of cases are employed in non-agricultural sectors. Although in this age group even half of them are inactive, what points to difficulties in accessing jobs is the significantly higher participation of the unemployed, which in this category, as well as the next age categories (25-34 years), is only 15.5%.

### **Fazes of development rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia**

Rural areas with the preserved nature and tradition of different rural areas have always attracted people to stay and vocation. More recently, the interest of people for vocation in rural areas has increased, primarily due to problems which are present in urban centers such as environmental pollution, increasing alienation from the natural environment, uniformity and

standardization offered by modern lifestyles in urban urban areas, etc. A certain number of authors (Lane 1994, Runte, 1990, Feifer, 1985) cite the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a historical time point since it has begun developing rural tourism. Their need to specifying time point is primarily motivated by the number of tourists who from that time begun to visited rural areas. However, such a precise timeframe in terms of determining the start point of rural tourism development should not be taken "strictly", especially, because people has gone for vocation and recreation in rural areas much earlier. Regarding this is witnessed by many facilities that were built and used for the purpose of their vocation, and are present in huge numbers there today. These are objects, such as summer houses, villas and objects for similar intentions. The countries that leading by the number of such facilities are United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Russia, etc. (Vuković at al. 2010). In Republic of Serbia rising interest for rural tourism vocation has begun to record since the seventies of the twentieth century.

Zodorov, A. V., (2009) state that rural tourism developed in most countries on the same way. He divided development of rural tourism in phases. If we accept his classification we can conclude that in the Republic of Serbia, rural tourism has developed on a same way with all characteristic and phases as it has in all other countries. First phase of development rural tourism can be named *independent establishing*. Monitoring of process of development rural tourism can show that rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia has started to develop since seventies of twentieth century. The villages that so called "pioneers" were Sirogojno, Seča Reka and Deviči. Leading tourist agencies from that time such as "Yugoturs" and "Putnik" were involved in the business of bringing foreign tourists to rural areas. Thus, according to the 1992 Serbian Tourist Association, in the Knić municipality there were about 35,000 foreign tourists from 21 countries. The largest number of tourists was recorded from Great Britain, Germany, Russia and Italy. (Todorivić, M. & Bjelac, Ž., 2009; Milojević, Lj., 2004, etc.) Municipalities in which rural tourism developed successfully until 2000 were Brus, Valjevo, Gornji Milanovac, Ivanjica, Knić, Kosjerić, Kraljevo, Lučani, Mionica, Požega, Prijepolje, Rača Kragujevac, Sokobanja, Užice, Čajetina, Čačak and Šabac. Indicators of the development of rural tourism are illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Indicators in the development of rural tourism in Serbia in the period 1990 - 2000 according to the data of the Tourist Organization of Serbia (TOS)

Year	1990	2000
Number of villages	50	41
Number of Households	800	170
Number of beds	3 000	800

**Source:** Milojević, Lj., (2004): „Rural Tourism in Serbia“, p.30, UNWTO: „Rural Tourism in Europe: Experiences, Development and Perspectives“, p. 27 -31, *Proceeding from Seminars, Belgrade (Serbia and Montenegro, 24-25 June 2002), Kielce (Poland, 06-07 June 2003), Yaremcha (Ukraine, 25-26 Sept. 2003)* published by UNWTO 2004. Web link: <http://www.idestur.org.br/download/20120219145557.pdf> (access 14.01.2017.)

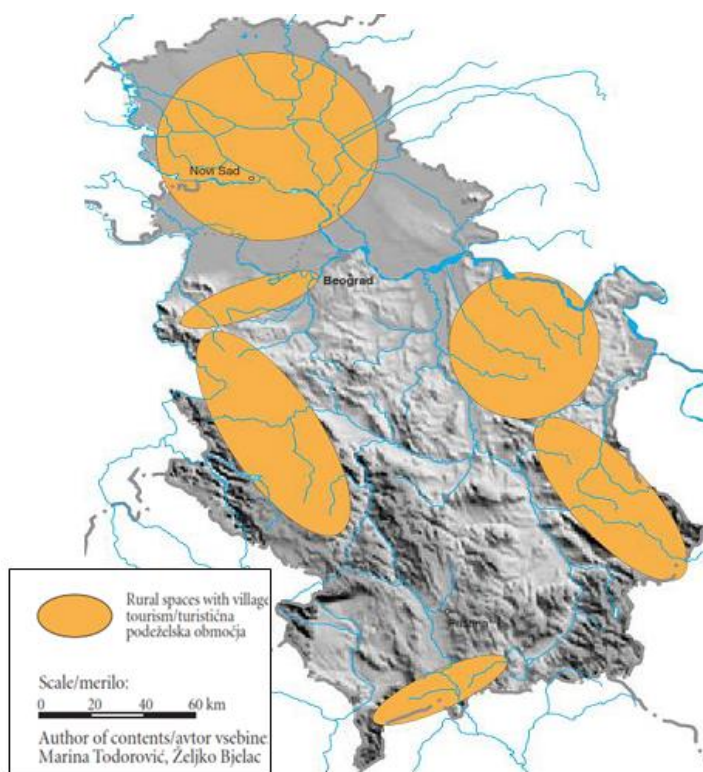
Milojević, Lj., (2004) state that characteristic of the first phase are:

- Strength: preserved and numerous natural resources, rich cultural and historical heritage, the number and diligence of rural settlements, the richness of local traditions, traditional hospitality, diversification of the tourist product.
- Disadvantages: inadequate rural infrastructure, "archaic" tourism product, underdeveloped information system, unsatisfactory level of quality of mixing and other services, lack of training programs for farmers to provide adequate quality of services, lack of experience, lack of motivation, undeveloped awareness in rural areas economic and other benefits of rural tourism development.

Second phase of development rural tourism *dedicated development* started 2006. Reason for this precise time defining phase, become for fact that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia made decision to allocate in a total of 91 580 215 dinars for development of rural tourism in period from 2006 to 2008 and diversification of economic activities in the countryside (“*Analysis of budget support to the development of rural tourism in Serbia and diversification economic activities in the countryside*”, 2009, p.2). In 2008 there were 173 users of these funds (141 registered agricultural producers, 23 associations of citizens, 7 legal entities and 2 agricultural cooperatives). The largest amount of funds was distributed to the region of Western Serbia and AP Vojvodina, while most districts were distributed in Zlatibor district, and the least in the North Bačka District. The analysis of the types of investments indicates that as much as 91% of the funds allocated were directed to the restoration of traditional rural farms (adaptation, upgrading and renovation of buildings, procurement of

equipment, etc.), while 9% were allocated for promotional and educational activities. The number of villages and municipalities involved in rural tourism increased in 2009 (41 municipalities, 119 villages with 164 households with 570 rooms and 1 628 beds). The main weaknesses in the development of rural tourism by 2009 are the non-organization and the lack of networking between promoters of the tourist offer. (Štetić and Todorović, 2009, p.86.) The map of the areas where rural tourism was successfully developed till the 2009 is illustrated in Figure 1, and is based on data presented by the Tourist Organization of Serbia at the "Tourism Fair" at the same year. After that period rural tourism has been starting to develop rapidly. Nowadays in Serbia process of developing rural tourism spread to all territory. In almost all rural areas can be fined farms or some other forms of rural tourism accommodation which implement some type of rural tourism.

**Figure 1.** Areas of the Republic of Serbia with developed rural tourism in 2009



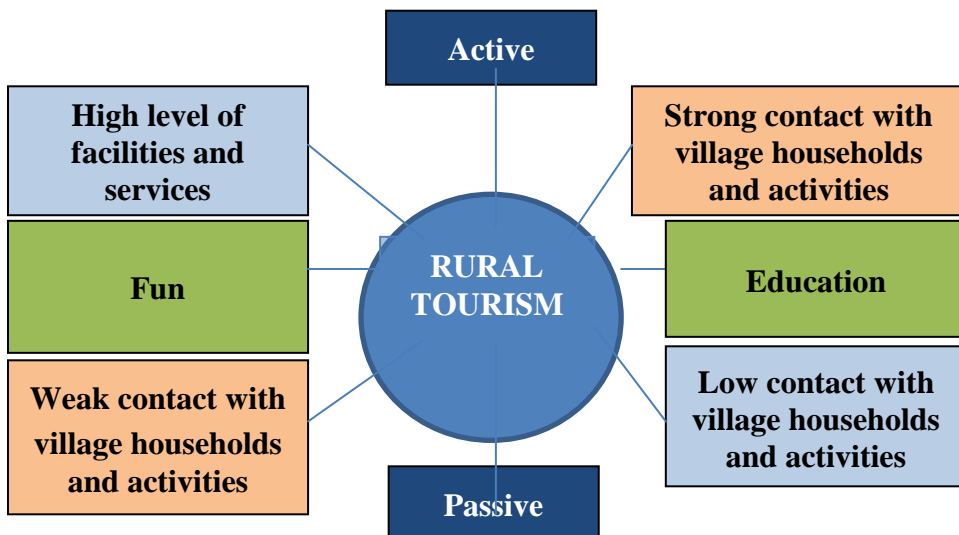
**Source:** Todorović, M., and Bjelac, Ž., (2009): „Rural tourism in Serbia as a Concept of Development in Undeveloped Regions“, p.455. Acta Geographica Slovenica, 49-2. (2009), p.453-473. **Notice:** Map is based on database of rural tourist destination made and presented by Tourist organization of Serbia on Belgrade tourism fair 2009.



## Accommodation facilities or rural tourism in Serbia

The level of exposure, contact, merging of tourists with a rural household and its participation in that household may vary from a high degree of fusion with a high level of contact within the rural household and related activities, to a low level of involvement in the same. The level of rural service can vary from very limited service to highly specialized and customized services. Therefore, rural tourism can be understood in terms of the balance between types of activities and types of accommodation. Rural tourism exists within the framework of these different definitions, whereby it changes and adapts.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 2.** Balance of types of activities and types of accommodation in rural tourism



**Source:** *Master plan of sustainable development of rural tourism in Serbia (2011), UNDP, p. 13.*

Official evidence about rural tourism accommodation by type and number in the Republic of Serbia does not exist. This evidence does not exist in the Ministry of tourism, also in Tourist Organization of Serbia nor in the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Business. Current list of accommodation facilities are incomplete and do not update regularly. For this reason management and monitoring of rural tourism development in

<sup>7</sup> Master plan of sustainable development of rural tourism in Serbia (2011), UNDP, p. 13.

Serbia has obstacles. Anyway it can be said that some of Internet web suites do monitoring partially. However, this is not official data. This kind of data represents only results of promotion of some local tourist organization which present their rural tourism facilities. In other words, this data represent rural tourism accommodation facilities of local regions.

One of database which summarizes most of accommodation facilities represents results on Internet web presentation [www.selo.rs](http://www.selo.rs) . This data base update periodically. Owner of this data is National association Agro tourism of Serbia. The association was established 2002 by nine local tourist associations. Nowadays association counts more than 500 members.

Promotion of tourist farms and its accommodation facilities is totally free. This association is member in European federation of rural tourism development (EUROGITES). Table 3. shows type of accommodation facilities in the Republic of Serbia which are presented on this Internet presentation.

**Table 3.** *Rural tourism accommodation facilities in the Republic of Serbia presented by National Association of rural tourism of Serbia.*

Type of accommodation facilities	Number
Apartment	106
Rural household	91
Guest house	45
Wooden House	31
Cottage	27
Villa	20
Rooms	17
Ethno Complex	10
Tourist Complex	8

**Source:** *National Association of rural tourism of Serbia, [www.selo.rs](http://www.selo.rs) (accessed 21.12.2017)*

However, it can be highlight that some of types of accommodation facilities which are presented on this web presentation are not in correlate with types of rural tourism accommodation prescribed by actual “Rules on conditions and manner of performing hospitality ...” (Official gazette of the Republic of Serbia no. 48/2012, and 58/2016).

Đurović, D., i Cvejić, S., (2011)<sup>8</sup> argue weakness of accommodation facilities of rural tourism in Serbia:

- Underdeveloped accommodation capacities and present unsatisfactory level of quality of existing ones;
- Insufficient utilization of existing accommodation capacities;
- Incomplete offer of basic tourist services;
- Small scale economy and low prices;
- Under development of additional services;
- Small investment capacity of households and slow development trend.

Štetić, S. i Todorović, M. (2009)<sup>9</sup> highlight problems on which are burden future development of rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia:

- Insufficient education of rural households concerned about the way of accepting and hosting visitors / tourists;
- Insufficient number of tourist points in the villages who are engaged in this type of tourism and poor connections with municipal, regional and national tourism organization (TOS);
- Insufficient and inadequate social and road infrastructure.

### **Influence of rural tourism on process of development rural areas in Serbia**

The problem of rural development is present in a large number of countries. Rural areas today are characterized by negative trends in population migration to urban centers, depopulation, aging of the rural population, reduction of macro-economic indicators, etc. The aim is to find solutions in order to stop these negative trends and launch them in the opposite direction. The best results in stopping negative trends have been provided by mechanisms that coordinate the development of agriculture with other economic activities on the principles of sustainable development. Tourism combines with its synergistic character a large number of economic activities aimed at satisfying tourists and with its positive multiplied effects, affects the development of the economy of rural areas.

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<sup>8</sup> Đurović, D., and Cvejić, S. (2011): "Rural tourism as a factor in rural development", p. 5-6. SeCons - Group Infectious Initiative, Sustainable Tourism in Function of Rural Development, Joint UN Program in Serbia, web link: <http://zir.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Ruralni-turizam-kao-cinilac-ruralnog-razvoja.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Štetić, S. and Todorovic, M. (2009): "Rural tourism", University of Belgrade, Faculty of Geography, p. 88.

The last four decades intention of the tourism market is to develop all types of tourism perspective in order to maximize the effects of development and strengthen competitiveness. Rural tourism is developing rapidly in Europe, North America, and Australia. Countries that have opted for the development of rural tourism have quickly felt the positive effects, in terms of solving numerous problems of rural areas (economic, social, cultural, etc.).

The reason for such an attitude stems from the fact that rural areas account for more than 80% of the territory and that according to the results of the 2011 census, 44% of the total population live in these areas. Serbia has good natural and social conditions that can be used for the development of rural tourism.

Natural conditions characterized a large geographical diversity of terrain, from the Pannonian flat land located in the north part, highland/hilly areas, which dominates the central part and a very mountainous region that characterized South Serbia region.

Social attractiveness is characterized by a large number of rural settlements with different planning urban organization, numerous cultural and historical monuments, multi-ethnicity that can favor the development of various cultural and artistic content, as well as the richness of traditional gastronomic offer.

One of the characteristics that also can bring benefits to development of rural tourism is relatively good ecological preservation of local environment, which is characteristic for the entire territory of the Republic, with a large number of protected areas (national parks, nature parks, special nature reserves, etc.).

All this resources can give contribution for planning different tourist product. Not only based on different kind of events that can promote local way of life but also different non passion activities that can be implement in rural areas.

In literature there are many classifications of activities that can be implementing in rural areas. One of the most famous is presented in table 4.

**Table 4.** *Additional services that tourist can implement in rural tourist destinations*

No.	Type of activity	Classification
1.	Touring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hiking (footpaths, fitness trails, nature parks etc),</li> <li>- Horse-riding,</li> <li>- Motoriyed touring,</li> <li>- Small town/village touring,</li> <li>- Adventure holidayz/wilderness holidayz,</li> <li>- Cycling,</li> <li>- <i>Cross-country</i> skiing,</li> <li>- Donkey riding,</li> <li>- Touring in gypsy caravans, wagons.</li> </ul>
2.	Water-related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fishing,</li> <li>- Swimming,</li> <li>- River/canal tourism (houseboats, narrow boats, barges),</li> <li>- Canoeing, kayaking and (whitewater) rafting,</li> <li>- Windsurfing,</li> <li>- Speedboat racing,</li> <li>- Sailing,</li> <li>- Facilities of the "aqualand" type</li> </ul>
3.	Aerial activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kite air sailing,</li> <li>- Light aircraft,</li> <li>- Hang-gliding and micro-light aircraft,</li> <li>- Hot air balloons,</li> <li>- Paragliding</li> </ul>
4.	Sporting activities	<p>a) sports requiring rural natural settings: photo safari, free climbing, orienteering, etc.</p> <p>b) Sports requiring modified/constructed settings: tennis, golf, low-intensity downhill skiing, hunting, etc.</p>
5.	Cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archaeology,</li> <li>- Restoration sites,</li> <li>- Rural heritage studies,</li> <li>- Museums,</li> <li>- Local industrial, agricultural or craft enterprises,</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courses in crafts,</li> <li>- Artistic expression workshops,</li> <li>- Folk groups,</li> <li>- Cultural, gastronomic and other routes.</li> </ul>
6.	Health-related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fitness training,</li> <li>- Spa and wellness <i>resorts</i>,</li> <li>- Health programs etc.</li> </ul>
7.	Passive activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relaxation holidays in rural milieu,</li> <li>- Nature study in outdoor settings, including bird watching,</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">photography,</li> <li>- Landscape appreciation.</li> </ul>
8.	Hallmark activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rural festivals,</li> <li>- Agricultural fairs,</li> <li>- Different types of rural events.</li> </ul>
9.	Business – related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings;</li> <li>- Small-scale conventions/conferences,</li> <li>- Incentive tourism short-breaks.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Roberts L. and Hall D., (2003): “Rural Tourism and Recreation: principles to practice”, Leisure and Tourism Management Department, The Scottish Agriculture College, Auchincruive, Ayr, UK, CABI Publishing, p. 2.

The growth of the attractiveness of rural environments as attractive places for the lives of young families is closely linked to the improvement of physical infrastructure, better accessibility of social services, improvement of the social structure and support to the development of entrepreneurship. Disregarding the specific needs of the village and its inhabitants, the lack of systematic and better coordinated activities of various actors, poses a serious threat to the further development of the developmental gap in relation to the city. The accessibility of IPARD funds, the strengthening of social capital and market connections, will strengthen rural environments and contribute to their sustainable development in the future. The great development chances of both agriculture and rural communities lay in the creation of an efficient system of knowledge transfer, technologies and information, as well as innovative ways of using the potentials of cultural heritage and biodiversity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "The Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2014-2024" (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 85/2014)

Analyzing of current situation in rural tourism in the Republic of Serbia was made in few documents (Master plan of sustainable development of rural tourism in Serbia 2011, Strategy of development tourism 2006 and Strategy of development tourism 2016, IPARD II program for the period 2014-2020 etc.). All this documents showed that rural tourism већ доприноси руралној економији и има велики потенцијал за даљи развој. У АП Војводини, западној и централној Србији постоје добри примери као и значајна искуства у рураланом туризму.

It is estimated that there are more than 32,000 beds (registered and unregistered) available for use for tourism purposes in rural households. It is also estimated that a total of \$ 10 billion of revenue comes from rural tourism (5 billion of accommodation services and 5 billion of direct revenues). This represents 16% of the 62 billion RSD of total direct tourism GDP, according to the 2010 World Tourism Organization. It is estimated that overnight stays in rural tourism account for 27% of the total number of overnight stays in Serbia. Therefore, rural tourism already plays an important role in the tourism of the Republic of Serbia.

The document „IPARD II program for the period 2014-2020“ takes the view that the „Strategy of tourism development“ takes into account the potential of rural tourism development in the Republic of Serbia, but not as a priority product. Thus, rural tourism in the production portfolio is placed at the bottom of the list of priorities in terms of activity and competitiveness.

However, there are other products that are closely related to rural tourism such as mountains, lakes, spas and wells, sightseeing tours, attractions in the field of special interests and nautics. This assessment of the „IPARD II program for the period 2014-2020“ is given primarily in the document "Strategy of development tourism in Serbia", which was adopted in 2006 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 91/06).

Also, the same document defines four clusters that are not based on the administrative and local regional boundaries that currently exist within the country, but above all on rational repositories and different forms of economics of experience. These four tourist clusters covering the entire territory of Serbia are: AP Vojvodina, Belgrade, Southeastern Serbia and southwestern Serbia (table 5).

**Table 5.** Territorial division of clusters in Serbia and prioritization by segment products in tourist clusters according to Strategy for development tourism until 2015.

Rural tourism	Tourism clusters			
	Belgrade	AP Vojvodina	Southwestern Serbia	Southeastern Serbia
<b>Rural experience</b>	●	●●●	●●●	●●●
<b>I. Activities in nature</b>				
a) Hunting	–	–	–	–
b) Fishing	●	●●●	●●	–
c) Bicycling	●	●●●	●	●
d) Horse riding	●	●●●	●●	●●
e) Walking in nature	●	●●	●●●	●●●
f) Bird watching – photo safari	●	●	●	●
e) Other	–	●	●●●	–
<b>II. Activities related to culture</b>				
a) Cultural Heritage Tours	–	●●●	●●●	●●●
b) Religious Heritage Tours	–	●●●	●●●	●●
c) Food tourism	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
d) Other	–	●●●	●●●	–
<b>High priority ●●●    Medium priority ●●    Low priority ●</b>				

**Source:** Strategy for development tourism in the Republic of Serbia (2007), Second phase report, p.91. Horwath Consulting Zagrab and Faculty of Economy, University of Belgrade.

The “Master Plan for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in Serbia” (2011) also insists on a territorial approach. Clusters were developed by



enumerating the factors and attractors present on certain territories, and then their groups according to the already developed master plans for tourism development for certain areas or municipalities. This document suggests the development of 12 clusters of rural tourism (CRT) of Serbia, which represent the potential for tourism development in certain geographical areas (destinations), presented in table 6.

**Table 6.** *Rural tourism clusters developed by territorial approach presented in the Master plan for sustainable rural tourism development in Serbia 2011.*

<b>STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT RURAL TOURISM CLUSTERS</b>	
<b>Group CRT 1: Central and Western Serbia</b>	CRT 1. Golija
	CRT 2. Zlatibor, Zlatar
	CRT 3. Kopaonik
	CRT 4. Central Serbia
<b>Group CRT 2: South Banat and Low Danube Region</b>	CRT 5. Low Danube Region
	CRT 6. South Banat
<b>Group CRT 3: Eastern Serbia</b>	CRT 7. Sokobanja
	CRT 8. East Serbia
	CRT 9. South-east Serbia
<b>Group CRT 4: AP Vojvodina</b>	CRT 10. Fruška Gora
	CRT 11. Upper Danube Region
	CRT 12. North Vojvodina

**Source:** „*Master plan of sustainable development of rural tourism in (2011)*“, UNDP, p. 87-88.

Territorial approach to the development of the CRT shows that Serbia has a large number of resources suitable for the development of rural tourism. What is specifically pointed out in the Master Plan ... is that despite the high concentration of factors and attractors in certain areas, there is a lack of centers for the development of appropriate rural tourism activities.

On the basis of a list of factors and attractors on the entire territory of Serbia, a total of 12 clusters of rural tourism have been identified, which should be developed as priority areas. As in the "Tourism Development Strategy", this document also has a territorial approach. In the "Master Plan ..." clusters are grouped into four spatial-geographic units: 1) Central and Western Serbia, 2) Southern Banat and Low Danube Region, 3)

Eastern Serbia, and 4) AP Vojvodina. It is noticeable that the division is not complementary to the division that was made in the "Strategy ..." as a basic document for the development of tourism in Serbia, which implies no agreement with official Law on Tourism.

The same document showed data which presented fact that rural tourism represent almost a third year number of overnight staying in Serbia, i.e. it already makes an important factor in generating income from tourism at the level of the Republic of Serbia. It is stated that "general tourist nights used for rural tourism" include accommodation in rural areas that can be used by tourists visiting rural areas, but does not indicate the number of overnight stays in "rural households", although the figure is that the village has 10 000 bearings.

Particularly pointed out the problem of the quality of the accommodation offer, and it is envisaged that by 2020 Serbia has around 68 000 places in rural areas, which represents a very ambitious goal, if the development is not accompanied by appropriate marketing activities. Authors of the Master plan (p. 12) highlighted that by combining the three main strategies (for rural activities, for activity centers and for rural accommodation), the formation of an integral strategy of a tourist experience is suggested. This is a good basis for the harmonization of all the elements that are included in the tourist offer and raising its quality. Tourists usually form a unique opinion about the destination they stay in, which can be positive or negative. If the strategies are harmonized, the greater the likelihood is to create a sense of overall satisfaction of tourists by staying in destinations, because the impression of staying in a destination is usually formed as positive or negative.

This attitude on the division of the cluster and the products of rural tourism was abandoned in the new "Strategy for development tourism in Serbia for the period 2016-2025." Namely, it is envisaged to develop certain tourist destinations and within them maximize the utilization of appropriate tourism resources (factors and attractors). Although explicitly rural tourism is not indicated, the principles on which the future development of tourism in Serbia should be based implicitly suggest the possibility of rural tourism development<sup>11</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup> Adopted by original text of Strategy of tourism for the period 2016-2025 (pp. 21-22)

- 1) *"An intense vacation* - most tourists expect to be guaranteed a profitable and completely contented holiday time. These tourists enjoy sharing their vacation experiences and are guided by the idea of "effort to rest", combining visits with more events, celebrations and active holidays, which in particular include an additional benefit when returning home with new skills ... " (Rural tourism provides a large number of opportunities for tourists to spend an intensive vacation in rural areas such as active participation in the normal everyday farm activities on which they spend their vocation, to various agricultural and non-agricultural activities that can be performed outside of the household. It expect that this way of thinking will be – note P.V.)
- 2) *Try something new* - in the last few years, research shows that many tourists are planning to explore new destinations; more than a third (35%) think they will go on vacation to destinations where they have never been before. Tourists who like to trap hard and reliable destinations also intend to try something new and almost half (48%) will very likely or almost certainly visit other destination. (Rural tourism offers great opportunities for various types of boarding and out-of-boarding house activities related to staying in farms, or in rural areas. In this way, there are opportunities for creating different tourist experiences, which are in line with this paragraph in the Strategy - note P.V.)
- 3) *To live as locals* - it became a manners that "dipped under the skin" for many tourists. They are looking for more authentic experiences on vacation and many companies now offer tourists the opportunity to enjoy hidden gems alongside traditional tourist attractions. Blogs and social networks are an interesting way to travel to discover hidden hot spots for experiencing stronger authentic experiences;
- 4) *increase of visits to the most important segments of the mobile* (museums, libraries, archives, galleries), *immovable* (archaeological sites, urban core, protected spatial cultural and historical units, monuments of folk architecture, fortification, battlefields, battlefields) and *immaterial* (visit of event such as: “day of saint Đurđevdan”; museum in the open field, "Staro selo in Sirogojno village" on Zlatibor mountain etc.) *cultural heritage*;
- 5) *Increase of group visits to significant celebrations and events* - Observed in 2014 and 2015, the number of (19%) group and family visits to significant institutions and cultural monuments, military memorials and places of suffering, as well as areas of

significant events, increased. Groups of tourists are increasingly choosing places of celebration of significant events from world wars, areas of significant battles, areas known for traditional weddings, harvesting and harvesting, departures with families to places that restore memories to attractive places from childhood and youth; (Just rural areas abound in places where happen different events. Almost every rural area in Serbia has its own recognizable manifestation- note P.V.);

- 6) *Fitness and sports* - according to a survey by the Association of British Travel Agencies (ABTA) (UK), 6% of people plan a sports holiday in 2015, and 5% leave for adventurous or other challenging recreational facilities, also 4% of people plan to travel to abroad to attend major sporting events. This trend that contains fitness and other sports activities and events will have a significant increase among middle-aged people; (Table 4 provides, among other things, a wide spectrum of various sports activities that can be used in rural areas. Some of them require the construction of appropriate tourism and sports infrastructure, thus improving the quality of life in rural areas - note P. V.);
- 7) *Wellness vocation* - wellness and spa vocation also have a trend of growth that continues in 2015 ... they are especially popular for business people who are looking for full recovery on vacation. Wellness programs are popular with individual travelers. At a price are destinations with natural beauties regardless of the distance ...; (Bearing in mind that a large number of spas in Serbia do not have adequate accommodation capacities, there is a possibility for tourists to use the accommodation capacities of rural tourism and to use spa health resorts, which would contribute to both, the development of spa and rural tourism – note P.V.);
- 8) *Food tourism* is a new trend of modern tourism. Food tourism is a growing phenomenon, as more than one-third of its consumption goes to food, according to a report from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). According to EUROSTAT data, 22% of Europeans say that the main reason for going to vacation is the possibility of consuming quality food.... Food prepared in a traditional manner, of healthy origin is an important factor in terms of quality of rest. One of the most commonly used definitions of gastronomic tourism: gastronomic tourism "is a journey into the region rich in gastronomic resources, which can generate relaxing experiences or entertainment, including visits to primary or secondary producers of gastronomic products,

gastronomic festivals, fairs, events demonstrating food preparation and tasting or any food-related activity "; (Territory of the Republic of Serbia characterized great geographical diversity, also rich anthropogenic heritage, multi-ethnicity, different agricultural products based on natural condition for agricultural production, etc. All this factors contribute to the rich and long culinary tradition. Every region can boast some characteristic food culinary products that have its own characteristic. Combination of traditional rural tourist supply with possibility to choose food prepared on organic and traditional way, can contribute to special tourist experience. Food tourism contributes directly and indirectly for development of agriculture, and also to development of rural areas. - note P.V.).

### **Conclusion**

Rural areas in Serbia make up 85% of its territory and are inhabited by about 44% of the total population. Rural areas are characterized by great geographical diversity, different levels of economic development, multiethnic, rich cultural - historical (anthropogenic) heritage and economy that relies heavily on primary agricultural production.

Rural areas have been devastated for decades in economic, social, cultural and political terms. This led to negative trends reflected in the migration of residents from rural to urban urban centers, the process of accelerated aging of the population, the decline in macroeconomic indicators, etc. This is not only characteristic for the Republic of Serbia, but it is characteristic for a number of other countries in Western Europe, North America, Russia, etc. The tendency is to find mechanisms to eliminate these negative trends and launch them in the opposite direction. The best results in stopping negative trends have been provided by mechanisms that coordinate the development of agriculture with other economic activities on the principles of sustainable development.

In strategic documents and official statements, the Serbian Government emphasizes the importance of tourism as an economic branch, which with its synergistic effect can positively influence the development of related activities. The expectations are that tourism could help solve a large number of problems that burden the Serbian economy (unemployment, foreign trade deficit, GDP and GDP growth, etc.), and especially the development of rural areas covering most of the territory of Serbia and

where a large part of the population lives of the population. The process of diversification of tourism products, which today is immanent to the tourism market, is favorable for the development of tourism in Serbia, given the limited conditions for the development of massive forms of tourism, that is, a small number of winter ski centers and the lack of natural-geographical outflow of the territory to the sea coast. As one of the products for which there are resuscitative possibilities for intensive development represents rural tourism.

The concept of rural tourism is very wide and does not include only a classic holiday in the countryside, but also a large number of extra-boarding activities that complement the stay of tourists in rural areas. It is precisely this character which can contribute to the development of not only the tourist infrastructure, but also the integration of rural areas, assistance in the employment of a large number of working-age population, and the end of the migration process. In order to achieve greater effects it is necessary that the marketing and management of tourist destinations become significant in practical implementation at all levels from local, regional to national. In this way, the development of rural areas would be planned and strategically guided, and the effects could be expected in the medium and long term.

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