



RESOURCES AND PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM OF STARA PLANINA MOUNTAIN

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Abstract: *Rural tourism, as a combination of different forms of tourism, acquaints visitors with life, art, culture and heritage of a specific region and is extremely suitable for the development of rural economy. The aim of this paper is to detect the resources and problems of the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina as well as the ecological development of the local community, with the possibility of sustainable and tourism development of settlements. By educating the local population in order to improve the quality of services, it is possible to achieve the economic development of the local community, with the goal of increasing the number of tourists. Consequently, the conditions for the rural settlements quality are created, where the local population has economic and other motives to continue the life in a village and where the quality of life is now approaching the level that is considered necessary in the world.*

Key words: *Stara planina, resources, problems, regional development*

1. Introduction

Protected nature and the environment in the rural area has always attracted, and in recent times even more attracts a large number of urban population. Therefore, there is an increasing interest in traveling in the countryside, and villages and rural areas are entering

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the circle of interest of an increasing number of tourists. From extensive research, obtained data show that rural tourism accounts for 10-25% in all forms of tourism activities, and accordingly, it is noted that rural tourism started in the rural area and that in the future it will achieve an ever-increasing number (Ružić, 2012).

Natural resources are just a part of natural conditions, what can be considered as a gift of nature, and are used in the reproduction process to create new useful values (Nikolić *et.al.*, 2013). "Natural Capital" as a term has long been used in literature, while the term "rural capital" has only entered the academic circles for the past several years.

However, in addition to the very favorable developmental aspects of rural tourism, there is also a great opportunity for development of the mining tourism in Stara Planina, the very fact that Stara Planina is one part of the abandoned mines.

Controlled inclusion in rural tourism on Stara Planina, can generate solid income for most of the population, both economic and social (Štetić, 2007). Lack of finance is often the stumbling block of many who live on this destination (Maksimović *et.al.*, 2015a). The tourism power itself, which should be reflected in the economic and social and cultural impact of tourism in this area, which is missing, can be found in the role of women in tourism, as well as the common overcoming of obstacles as an accompanying element of rural tourism development (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012). When it comes to economic sustainability, we will stay on economic tools for the management of tourists on Stara Planina, because as stated Petrić and Mandić (2014), it is desirable to introduce management tools for tourists, which can be divided into four groups: institutional, economic, managerial and information technology tools. The basic economic tools can be: price difference in relation to other destinations, collection of ecological tourist taxes taking into account that Stara planina was declared as a nature park and may be incentives for public and private sector aimed at increasing the volume of visitors and rational use of energy and other resources, (Petrić & Mandić, 2014).

2. Literature review

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 revitalization of village 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 who come from small agricultural holdings, (Butler, 1999).

The sustainable development of rural tourism involves the formulation and implementation of the strategy for the sustainable development of the Republic of Serbia, in the long run and in a quality way, where it has to ensure the fulfillment of economic, ecological and institutional aspects of sustainable development. According to Miladinovic and others (2012), The notion of sustainable development is most often associated with the protection of life by planning social development, economic and political issues. Basically, this is a political and global concept that is at the beginning primarily related to the problems of environmental protection of the less developed countries. The idea of sustainable

Resources and problems of development of rural tourism of Stara planina

development basically has an improvement in the quality of life and the desire to create a better world with various societies, economic and environmental factors, (Miladinović *et.al.*, 2012). Therefore, the need for securing long-term economic growth is imposed which is accompanied by increased innovation and technological advancement, by ensuring social responsibility, by increasing employment, by reducing poverty and adequate distribution of natural resources (Paunković *et.al.*, 2012). Starting from the exceptional importance and value of available natural resources, sustainable development of rural tourism, as well as commercial tourism, in general, occupies a significant place in the economic development of Eastern Serbia. The sustainable development of rural tourism is certainly aimed at preserving the natural environment and to meet human needs, as well as to improve quality the lives of people and the economic development of local communities. As an essential element of sustainable development is, of course, a way of using renewable and non-renewable resources, (Edin & Fehrić, 2011).

Although it has already been noted that the unique definition of the concept of sustainable tourism officially does not exist, and in various works a considerable number of different definitions can be found, (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, however, the conceptual domain is expanded by the addition of a cultural and political dimension, (Bramwell *et. al.*, 1996).

To achieve the economic effects of rural tourism development on Stara Planina, it should seriously work to improve the quality of offers and services. Special attention should be taken to train managers and all employees in order to better communicate and manage the behavior of tourists in order to attract the attention of domestic and foreign visitors to Stara Planina. For this purpose, local training should not be omitted for inclusion in the tourism sector, the participation of local self-government in the implementation of sustainable rural tourism development on Stara Planina, as well as the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector, especially by local entrepreneurs by employing the local population in all business segments. The offer of suitable accommodation and accompanying tourist facilities could significantly affect attracting foreign capital, all in order to develop all the resources of Stara Planina. Good organization and coordination of all tourism policy holders, followed by the growth and development of tourism on Stara Planina, all in order to achieve positive economic results and prosperity of the local population.

The cultural sustainability of rural tourism has recently been interdependent between tourism and cultural heritage. According to the recommendation of the Council of Europe on the promotion of tourism 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. Tourist-cultural offer does not only include the offer for tourists, but also to domestic populations who, perhaps even before others, need to become familiar with their cultural potentials to make them better understood and more respected, because, on the one hand, a new framework for the dynamic cultural life of the local population is gaining, and on the other, attractive tourist and cultural offer of the city and

the village, which can attract tourists to better know their personal cultural resources, (Dojčinović, 2005).

3. Materials and methods

The aim of this paper is to examine and detect the resources and problems of the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina. The survey was conducted in the territory of the local communities of the municipality of Pirot and the municipality of Knjazevac in the period from 15.09.2016. until 30.10.2016. years. The research was anonymous, and the survey questionnaire was used as a research tool. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed. Upon completion of the research, the number of validly completed questionnaires relevant to the research amounted to 200 which represents 80% of respondents. The response level as well as the number of validly filled questionnaires is expected and corresponds to the results.

For the greatest wealth and resources of Stara Planina are proposed the following alternatives:

- Agricultural land;
- Enterprises;
- Preserved nature;
- Developed infrastructure;
- Cultural heritage.

For the greatest general problem on Stara Planina, the following alternatives have been proposed:

- Poor road connection;
- Unemployment of the local population;
- Old population;
- Small salaries at the local level;
- Ecological problems.

For the greatest environmental problem on Stara Planina proposed the following alternative:

- Waste water;
- Municipal waste;
- Pollution from traffic;
- Pollution from the industry.

For the gradation of the obtained answers, the five-step Likert scale was applied, and the results are shown in the tables which follow.

Resources and problems of development of rural tourism of Stara planina

4. Research results

The survey involved 46% of women and 54% of men. Of the total number of respondents, 47% are residents of the municipality of Knjaževac, while 53% are residents of the municipality of Pirot. Employees in local government, 29% from the tourism and hospitality sector 23%, from other sectors (culture, transport, agriculture, etc.). 26% of respondents and 22% of the unemployed respondents.

Table 1. The greatest wealth of Stara Planina

	Completely inconsistent	Partially inconsistent	Neutral	Partly agree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation
Agricultural land	8.0%	4.7%	13.3%	42.0%	32.0%	3.85	1.159
Enterprises	25.3%	16.7%	16.7%	22.7%	18.7%	2.93	1.468
Preserved nature	5.3%	5.3%	6.0%	33.3%	50.0%	4.17	1.108
Developed infrastructure	7.3%	24.0%	22.0%	23.3%	23.3%	3.31	1.268
Cultural heritage	6.0%	2.7%	10.0%	37.3%	42.0%	4.77	5.356

Source: Author

From the Table 1 it is evident that the group of questions related to the wealth of Stara Planina, highest average score (4.77) is the respondents' opinion that the greatest wealth of Stara Planina is cultural heritage, wherein 37.3% of the respondents are partly agree and 42% of the respondents is strongly agree. In the second place, according to the respondents, the nature is preserved with an average grade of 4.17. The lowest average score is 2.93 in the opinion of the respondents that the enterprises are the biggest wealth of Stara Planina, where over 40% completely disagree with this statement.

Table 2. The biggest greatest problem on Stara Planina

	Completely inconsistent	Partially inconsistent	Neutral	Partly agree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation
Poor road connection	6.0%	8.0%	11.3%	29.3%	45.3%	4.00	1.196
Unemployment of the local population	0.7%	6.7%	10.7%	33.3%	48.7%	4.23	0.934
Old population	10.0%	2.7%	12.0%	30.7%	44.7%	3.97	1.256
Small salaries at the local level	1.3%	6.0%	10.7%	21.3%	60.7%	4.34	0.980
Ecological problems	6.7%	12.7%	13.3%	34.7%	32.7%	3.74	1.226

Source: Author

From table no. 2 it can be seen that in a group of issues related to general problems on Stara Planina, the highest average score of 4.34 is related to the opinion of the respondents that the biggest general problem on the Stara Planina mountain is the low salaries at the local level, where 21.3% of respondents are partially in agreement and 60.7% of respondents fully agree. This is an indicator that the majority of respondents are most concerned about personal existence, and then only ecological problems and road connections. The lowest average score of 3.74 is in the opinion of the respondents that environmental problems are the biggest general problems on Stara Planina, where over 65% are in agreement with that statement.

Table 3. Responsibility for the general problem on Stara Planina

	Completely inconsistent	Partially inconsistent	Neutral	Partly agree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation
Municipality	4.0%	3.3%	13.3%	34.7%	44.7%	4.13	1.030
Country	0.7%	4.7%	8.7%	32.7%	53.3%	4.33	0.871
Entrepreneurs	8.7%	9.3%	10.7%	34.7%	36.7%	3.81	1.264
Bad laws and a lack of good plans and projects	4.0%	6.0%	16.0%	23.3%	50.7%	4.11	1.122

Source: Author

From table no. 3 it can be seen that in a group of issues related to the responsibility for general problems on Stara Planina, the highest average score is 4.33, and in the opinion of the respondents that the responsibility for the general problem on Stara Planina is borne by the, where 32.7% of respondents are partially in compliance and 53.3% of respondents fully agree that over 85%. The lowest average score is 3.81 in the opinion of the respondents that entrepreneurs are most responsible for general problems on Stara Planina, where over 70% agrees with that conclusion

Table 4. The biggest ecological problem of Stara Planina

	Completely inconsistent	Partially inconsistent	Neutral	Partly agree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation
Waste water	4.7%	8.7%	18.0%	34.0%	34.7%	3.85	1.130
Municipal waste	0.7%	8.0%	16.0%	34.7%	40.7%	4.07	0.972
Pollution from traffic	16.0%	11.3%	13.3%	26.0%	33.3%	3.49	1.453
Pollution from the economy	17.3%	13.3%	13.3%	24.7%	31.3%	3.39	1.476

Source: Author

Resources and problems of development of rural tourism of Stara planina

From table no. 4 shows that the question related to the biggest environmental problem of Stara Planina, the highest average score (4.07) is in the opinion of the respondents that the biggest environmental problem of Stara planina is municipal waste, where 34.7% of respondents are partially in compliance and 40.7% of respondents fully agree, which is over 75% in total. The lowest average score is 3.39 in the opinion of the respondents that the biggest environmental problem of Stara Planina is pollution from the economy, where over 30% is incompatible with this finding, and 13.3% is neutral, because the pollution from the economy on Stara Planina almost does not exist

Table 5. Responsible for the ecological problem

	Completely inconsistent	Partially inconsistent	Neutral	Partly agree	Strongly agree	Average	Standard deviation
Residents of municipalities	4.0%	9.3%	14.7%	29.3%	42.7%	3.97	1.145
Summerhouse	6.0%	7.3%	14.0%	34.0%	38.7%	3.92	1.165
Pollutants from the environment	3.3%	12.7%	8.7%	28.7%	46.7%	4.03	1.168
Municipality	5.3%	0.7%	8.0%	25.3%	60.7%	4.35	1.035

Source: Author

From table no. 5 shows that the question related to the responsibility for the environmental problem of Stara Planina, he highest average score (4.35) is the respondents' opinion that the greatest responsibility for the environmental problem will take the municipality of Stara Planina, where 25.3% of the respondents are partially in agreement and 60.7% of the respondents fully agree that the total is over 85%. The lowest average score is 3.92 with the respondents' opinion that the greatest responsibility for the environmental problem of Stara Planina bear weekenders, where 34% of respondents are partially in agreement, and 38.7% of respondents fully agree.

5. Conclusion

Stara planina has the potential and excellent conditions for further development of rural tourism, primarily due to the excellent geographical position, diverse landscapes, gastronomy, foliar, multinationality and rich cultural heritage. The products of forgotten crafts are also of great cultural value through which they are introduced to the heritage of the local. Creating basic conditions for general, significantly higher comfort in rural areas contributes to the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina, which, in turn, can stop the departure of young people from these parts.

In addition to all the abovementioned potentials and unused resources, Stara Planina has certain problems that are more or less present in all tourist destinations. The opinion of

the majority is that it is the biggest general problem on Stara Planina, small wages at the local level and that the state has the greatest responsibility for this problem. Regarding environmental problems, the biggest municipal waste, and in the opinion of the majority, responsibility for this problem lies with the municipality.

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RESURSI I PROBLEMI RAZVOJA RURALNOG TURIZMA STARE PLANINE

Sažetak: Ruralni turizam kao kombinacija različitih oblika turizma, upoznaje posetioce sa životom, umetnošću, kulturom i baštinom određenog kraja i izuzetno je pogodan za razvoj ruralne ekonomije. Cilj ovog rada je detektovati resurse i probleme razvoja ruralnog turizma na Staroj planini kao i ekononski razvoj lokalne zajednice uz mogućnost održivosti ruralnih naselja i razvoja turizma. Edukacijom lokalnog stanovništva u cilju poboljšanja kvaliteta usluga je moguće ostvariti ekononski razvoj lokalne zajednice a sve u cilju povećanja broja tuista. Samim tim se stvaraju uislovi za kvalitetnijim komforom ruralnih naselja gde lokalno stanovništvo ima ekonomske a i druge motive da nastave život na selu gde se kvalitet života danas približava onom nivou koji se u svetu smatra neophodnim.

Ključne reči: Stara planina, resursi, problmi, regionalni razvoj