

SUPPORT TO RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN VOJVODINA BY LOCAL POPULATION

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Abstract: Special attention is being paid to the development of rural tourism, because it can contribute to the social and economic renewal of rural areas. A special problem in the study of support for the development of rural areas is their peripheral position, so that they are mostly neglected in the tourism literature and scientific studies. Rural tourism seems to be an appropriate means of revitalizing abandoned rural areas and ensuring their sustainability in the future by preserving jobs or creating new jobs (thus encouraging young people to stay in the countryside), increasing diversity of occupations, preserving services, preserving landscape and nature or supporting preserving rural crafts as tourist attractions. Vojvodina is a part of Serbia, which abounds in natural resources, which can be offered in the tourist development of rural areas. However, the rural tourism product has not yet experienced its expansion, in addition to the resource base. In recent decades, residents of rural areas in many European countries have begun to view the development of rural tourism as a strategy for sustainable local development. The local population directly influences tourism, and tourism is increasingly influencing the local population whose culture, tradition and heritage is becoming an important motive for tourist travel. The fact that long-term planning in tourism is related to the reactions of the local population to tourism cannot be ignored, because tourism can develop and grow only when the local population has a positive attitude towards it and understands its role in the process of its development. The authors of the paper conducted a field research in Vojvodina on a total of 215 respondents. The aim of the research was to determine the attitude of the local population on the development of rural tourism, and to establish whether the support prevails or whether there are still several opposing views on the importance and impact of rural tourism product. The data obtained were processed in the software SPSS AMOS, version 21.00. Based on the obtained data, it was concluded that the population supports the development of tourism in rural areas, but that they see both positive and negative effects from this development. The SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis model concluded that demographic factors influence the attitude towards the effects of tourism development in rural areas of Vojvodina. By accepting the ruling views, and emphasizing their own and very convincing statements, the authors have shown responsibility and selfless scientific commitment in their manuscript, and this work is considered socially significant for the future development of rural areas.

Keywords: rural tourism, development, local population, Vojvodina.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The area of Vojvodina, as an Autonomous Province in the Republic of Serbia, is 21,614 km², with a total of 467 settlements and 1,881,357 million inhabitants. In the structure of GDP of AP Vojvodina, industry represents 53.4%, services with 30%, agriculture with about 10%, and construction with 6.9%, while GDP per capita in rural areas is 74% of the national average. The agricultural population of Vojvodina makes up 26% of the active agricultural population of Serbia (Petrović et al., 2018). There is 0.88 hectares of arable land per capita. If we take into account that the average farm size is about 3.59 ha of arable land and that each farm has about three separate plots, it can be concluded that Vojvodina has a very unfavorable property structure. Some estimates indicate that about 65% of the total world tourist demand is directed towards natural values and spaces, it is impossible to determine more precisely how much of that huge world tourist wave flows to rural areas (Petrović et al., 2018).

Rural tourism is already developed in some parts of Vojvodina, but the position it occupies on the tourist market is unenviable, especially if we take into account the rich resource base and geographical position. It is known that the existence of natural and anthropogenic resources is not a sufficient condition for tourist competitiveness. If we look at Serbia, it can be said that more than 80% of the territory of Serbia consists of rural areas, and that about 45% of the population lives in rural areas, and that Serbia is multiethnic, that is, that more than 30 peoples and nationalities live in it (Cvijanović et al., 2018). The concept of rural tourism is not terminologically uniform and clear in all countries, so the following terms are used in this context: rural tourism, agro-tourism, rural tourism, farm tourism, green tourism and the like. On average, 408,580 overnight stays take place within rural tourism in Serbia, ie about 6.2% of the total number of overnight stays in Serbia (Gajić et al., 2017). Domestic visitors make up almost 90% of all visitors in rural tourism in Serbia (Tourism Development Strategy in Serbia until 2015). As many as 38.70% of households do not offer food services, which significantly reduces their

income opportunities. Rural tourism must be developed in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism, which includes ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability in order to improve the quality of the tourist destination (preserved natural environment, cultural and historical heritage, cultural identity and positive relationship between locals and tourists) (Blažević et al., 2018).

As more significant characteristics of modern tourist demand for rural tourism: the number of those tourists whose basic life motive is to return man to nature and its original values is growing; the demand for unurbanized rural and protected natural landscapes, as well as villages with significant cultural and historical values is expanding. There are different criteria for defining the very concept of rurality. These are often demographic factors, income level, spatial criteria, and the basic activity of the population in the territory that is defined as rural. Sociological aspects are rurally defined as a space that lags behind in relation to cultural and technological development (Jing et al., 2017). The features of the development of modern tourist demand are the return to nature, and green destinations, to non-urban spaces.

Latkova (2012) calls tourism a promoter of tradition, stating the need to develop traditional values that make destinations special, and thus attractive to tourists. A single market presence has not been built yet, and in that way the positioning of the Republic of Serbia on the tourist market has been prevented (Petrović et al., 2017). Rural tourism as a segment of the entire tourism is especially important in Vojvodina, a region that has no sea, high mountains, exotic landscapes or spectacular cultural heritage. However, beautiful landscapes of cultivated land with small villages and farms, rivers, lakes and marshes, Fruška gora with monasteries and Sremski Karlovci, with traditional hospitality can provide a pleasant experience for tourists seeking rest and recreation in a peaceful environment. It is an indisputable fact that rural tourism or tourism in a rural tourist household has taken an important place in the tourism sector (Blešić et al., 2018).

The need to stay in a village or farm in Vojvodina is imposed by a modern lifestyle, which is characterized by accelerated pace, stress, city noise and distance of people from nature, but also from themselves. It is encouraging that in the period from 2005 to 2014, the number of foreign tourist arrivals in Vojvodina was constantly increasing (except in 2009, when there was a decrease in foreign tourist arrivals of 6%, which can be attributed to the effects of the global economic crisis), and that it increased by 24% at the end of the observed time period (Novković et al., 2013). Numerous authors have researched the attitudes of the local population about the impacts of tourism, and concluded that these impacts can be divided into three main categories: economic, environmental and social or socio-cultural. Most previous research on the impact of tourism on the attitudes of residents has shown that people living in rural areas want to be able to influence important decisions at the local level and have insight into future tourism development plans in their environment. The need to involve the local population in destination tourism planning is confirmed by Perdue (1987), stating that in destination tourism development planning, destination management must take into account the wishes, suggestions and good initiatives of the local population, because only in this way will be more systematic and better development of destination tourism, and the impact of shortcomings and negative attitudes of the population towards tourism will be reduced. Research on the impact of tourism on the local population has been present in scientific circles for more than 50 years. These researches focused on the positive effects of tourism in the 1960s, on the negative ones in the 1970s, while in the 1980s they emphasized the equal impact of both negative and positive aspects of tourism development on the local environment (Williams et al., 2001). The positive effects of tourism on the environment include the preservation of natural resources and the arrangement of settlements and the environment, while the negative, in the opinion of the respondents, are pollution and a large amount of garbage.

One of the first models, the Iridex model, which examined the attitude of residents towards tourism, was set up in 1975 (Blešić et al., 2014). Based on this model, it was concluded that the attitude of the population about the development of tourism is variable depending on the level of tourism development. Residents have a more positive attitude towards tourism development in the beginning, and as tourism development progresses over time, their attitude becomes negative. Subsequent research has shown that individuals who directly benefit from tourism development have a positive attitude from the beginning of tourism development, while those who have no interests may have a negative attitude even in the initial stage of development. Following the Iridex model, several scales have been successfully set to measure attitudes towards tourism and its impacts on the local community in various tourist destinations. The scale for measuring the impact of tourism development on the attitudes of the local population (TIAS scale), which was tested in rural areas, was set by Lankford and Howard in 1994 (Blešić et al., 2011).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the first phase of the research, the authors relied on the collection of numerous statistical and theoretical data on a given topic, using a large number of scientific research papers and secondary documentation. Based on previous knowledge and research, the authors gave themselves the freedom to draw their own conclusions, which enhances the importance of research. In this part of the research, the authors came to numerous data and presented them in a very clear and understandable text in the paper, with a detailed analysis of contemporary

literature and research findings on the given and current topics. All facts are supported by statistical data and available documentation, which increases the importance and seriousness of the research work and the overall content of the paper. In the second phase of the research, the authors conducted a field survey, on a sample of 215 inhabitants of rural areas of Vojvodina. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, but only complete questionnaires were taken for analysis and processing, with complete answers. The survey was conducted in the period between May and April 2019 in 10 rural municipalities of Vojvodina. SPSS AMOS software, version 21.00, was used for data processing and analysis.

Research hypotheses have been set:

H1: The local population supports rural tourism development.

H2: Demographic factors have an impact on attitudes about the effects of rural tourism trends.

The analysis that led to the results is SEM analysis (Structural equation modeling - SEM). A method that has goals similar to multiple regression, but this approach is much broader so that it takes into account modeling of interactions, nonlinearity, related independent variables, measurement error, and multiple latent independent variables. SEM can also be used as a powerful alternative to multiple regression, trajectory analysis, factor analysis, time series analysis, and covariance analysis (Petrović et al., 2018). These procedures can be considered as special cases of SEM or, viewed on the other hand, SEM is an extension of the general linear model (GLM) of which multiple regression is a part. The advantages of SEM over multiple regression are that it includes more flexible assumptions to reduce measurement error by taking multiple indicators for each latent variable, in the attractiveness of SEM graphical modeling, testing the whole model before testing individual coefficients, able to models with multiple dependent variables are tested, also in the ability to model indirect variables rather than introducing additional ones, in the ability to model the notion of error, as well as in the ability to handle complex data (time series with autocorrelated errors, abnormal data, incomplete data).

3. RESULTS

Before starting the analysis, it was necessary to examine whether all preconditions were met. Levene's homogeneity test of variance proved that the precondition is fulfilled, because the significance level of the homogeneity test is less than 0.05. Categorical variables are shown by relative (%) frequency. The central tendency of numerical features is shown by the arithmetic mean (m), and the scattering by the standard deviation (sd). The selected significance level is $p < 0.05$, and the results are presented in a table. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient determines the reliability of all items, more precisely the value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.918, which makes the questionnaire on the basis of which the research was conducted, very reliable.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for items

Items		m	sd
Positive effects	Tourism should be more represented in the development of municipalities	1,68	0,898
	Society needs to be more involved in tourism development	1,56	0,812
	The government should be more supportive of tourism development	1,52	0,819
	Long-term planning reduces the negative effects of tourism development	1,80	0,873
	We are involved in the planning and development of rural tourism	2,08	0,716
	Rural tourism creates new jobs	2,01	0,927
	Tourism attracts new investments	1,81	0,872
	Rural tourism raises the standard	1,70	0,835
Negative effects	Rural tourism brings new infrastructure construction	1,97	0,690
	The local population suffers the consequences due to the development of rural tourism	1,97	0,641
	The development of rural tourism increases noise and pollution	2,01	0,623
	Rural tourism increases the cost of living	2,02	0,700
General Support	Rural tourism increases crime	1,94	0,653
	Support of rural tourism development	1,44	0,576
Effects	Positive effects	1,79	0,348
	Negative effects	1,99	0,357
Sum of effects	Effects	1,89	0,28
			5

Source: author's research. *m = arithmetic means, sd = standard deviation, $p < 0.05$

Table 2. Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Estimate for effects 0,158			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
effects	<---	Age	0,02	0,01	1,12	0,26
effects	<---	Education	0,04	0,02	2,18	0,02
effects	<---	Earn	0,15	0,02	5,83	***

Source: author's research

4. DISCUSSION

The first table provides data on arithmetic values and standard deviation for all questions. The local population item Tourism should be more represented in the development of municipalities gave an average score of 1.68 (sd = 0.898). The item related to the fact that the company must participate more in the tourist development $m = 1.56$, $sd = 0.812$ was rated slightly lower. Also, that the government should be more involved in tourism development, the local population gave an average score of $m = 1.52$. The average value for the item Long-term planning reduces the negative effects of tourism development is $m = 1.80$ ($sd = 0.873$). How much the population is involved in the planning of rural tourism development is shown by the arithmetic mean for this item $m = 2.08$. Also, item Rural tourism creates new jobs, with an average grade of 2.01 ($sd = 0.927$). Survey participants rated the issue related to the tourism impact on new investments ($m = 1.81$), and the issue related to the impact of rural tourism on the standard $m = 1.70$. In general, the average score is sufficient and not very satisfactory when looking at the attitude of the population towards the impact of rural tourism products. The development of rural tourism in the examined rural areas can affect the growth of infrastructure ($m = 1.97$; $sd = 0.690$). From the negative impacts of tourism development in rural areas, it is stated that the population suffers consequences ($m = 1.97$; $sd = 0.690$). However, many respondents in this survey believe that tourism development increases pollution and noise ($m = 2.01$; $sd = 0.623$). Item Rural tourism increases the cost of living got the average value of the arithmetic mean $m = 2.02$. The population believes that better tourism development will cause higher costs. A certain percentage of respondents claim that tourism increases crime in given rural areas $m = 1.94$ ($sd = 0.653$). Generally for the item Support of rural tourism development the arithmetic value is $m = 1.44$ ($sd = 0.576$).

The second table gives an overview for Regression Weights (Estimate, S.E, C.R). The first covariance between year variables and effects is estimated to be 0.02, with an estimate of the standard covariance error $S.E = 0.018$. Estimate 0.02 is an observation of an approximately normally distributed random variable centered around the covariance of a population with a standard deviation of 0.018. These figures serve to construct a 95% confidence interval on the covariance population by calculating Estimate and S.E. The Critical Ratio (C.R) was obtained by dividing the covariance estimate by its standard error. At a statistical significance of $p < 0.05$, any C.R exceeding 1.96 is considered significant. If this value is achieved, it is considered that the covariance between the variables differs significantly from 0, at the level of significance $p < 0.05$. It is noticed that this value is less than 1.96, therefore it can be concluded that the years do not significantly affect the variable effects of tourism development. A large P in addition to C.R gives about two tailed p values to test the hypothesis. In this case, the covariance between the variables differs from 0, with $p = 0.26$. Calculation P implies that parameter estimates are normally distributed, and are accurate only in large samples. For the education variable, the covariance value is estimated to be 0.04, with a standard error estimate of $S.E = 0.021$. The C.R value is 2.18, which is greater than 1.96, and is considered significant, which is confirmed by the I value of p, which is 0.02. These data indicate that education has an impact on attitudes about the effects of tourism development. Estimate of the third covariance between earnings and the effects of tourism development, is 0.15, with a standard error estimate of $S.E 0.027$. Critical Ratio (C.R) is 5.83, with a value of $p < 0.05$, and the level of earnings of the local population is correlated with the effects of tourism development. The more educated the population, the more they assess the impact of positive and negative effects of tourism development in rural areas. Based on the obtained results, both initial research hypotheses were confirmed. The local population generally supports the development of tourism in rural areas, and demographic factors have an impact on the effects of tourism in these areas of research.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the OECD definition (1994), rural tourism should be: located in rural areas; functionally rural, which implies specific characteristics of rural areas: small scale of enterprises, open spaces, contact with nature, cultural heritage, traditional society and traditional practice; rural in scope, in terms of buildings and settlements, which would be smaller in size; traditional character, slow growth and organic production, related to local households (Cvijanović et al., 2020). It is often widely locally controlled and developed, for the long-term well-being of the area; sustainable, in the sense that its development helps to preserve the specific rural features of the area, as well as that its development must be sustainable in terms of resource conservation. Rural tourism should be seen as a potential means of preservation and sustainability, rather than as a means of

urbanization and development, representing a complex network of rural environment, economy and history. Rural tourism, and thus rural, has seen rapid growth in recent decades. Numerous factors have influenced this trend.

First of all, people look for shorter vacations and trips, travel more often by car, search for new experiences, return to nature and original values and the like. It is especially interesting for tourists from urban areas to visit the village and the rural household and return to their roots. On the one hand, the development of rural tourism in Vojvodina can play an important role in increasing the tourist offer in the whole of Serbia and forming a richer image of the country. On the other hand, tourism in villages and farms should not only be a goal, but also a means of stimulating economic growth, strengthening underdeveloped regions and improving the living standards of the local population (Andrić et al., 2010). In Vojvodina, the fact is known about the increase in poverty in the countryside and the departure of an increasing number of people from those areas. The development of tourism in these poor areas leads to the emergence of multifunctional agriculture, which gives people on farms and villages additional opportunities for economic strengthening.

Rural tourism offers the exact opposite of modern tourism - an escape into nature and a return to what he believed he had lost forever, returns him to his original state, ie. nature and people. The development of this extremely popular form of tourism in Vojvodina will influence the revitalization of villages and stop the deterioration of the social structure of rural areas (Gajić et al., 2014). At the same time, engaging in rural tourism will have a positive impact on the economic condition of rural households, which are the basis of the overall development of rural areas. It is extremely important to point out that rural tourism contributes to the preservation and promotion of the diversity of spiritual and material values of Vojvodina and the preservation of the environment. Previously, the global impact of rural tourism on the community and the environment is presented, while the following paragraphs are dedicated to what this form of tourism brings to you readers, ie potential or existing service providers. Engaging in rural tourism or tourism in a rural household opens numerous opportunities for employment and self-employment, and thus contributes to the realization of new sources of income. Rural tourism is based on natural resources - national parks and nature parks, authentic architectural heritage, cultural landscape of dry stone walls, vineyards, olive groves as well as traditional culture, folk customs and gastronomy (Cvijanović et al., 2018). Rural tourism not only means cheap accommodation and stay in a rural environment (farms), but also allows visitors to attend various events, festivals, outdoor recreation such as cycling, hiking, horseback riding, boating, etc. Rural tourism allows tourists to try local specialties, buy local agricultural products and handicrafts. Rural tourism is an appropriate way to revitalize declining rural areas, and tourism ensures their sustainable future by retaining or even creating new jobs, thus increasing the diversity of jobs and services (McGehee et al., 2004).

In this sense, tourism is seen as a way to overcome a number of problems in the development of rural areas around the world. Rural tourism is becoming the engine of economic development and raising the standard of living in rural communities, because it is based on the principles of sustainable development and conservation of natural resources. The basic resource for the development of rural tourism is nature, and it is estimated that about three quarters of the total world tourist demand is directed towards natural values and untouched areas. Motives for visiting rural areas such as: peace, quiet, unpolluted air and water, healthy climate, preserved nature, meeting new people (locals), healthy food (slow food), slower pace of life, physical activity, leisure. They are responsible for the emergence of rural tourism oriented towards the individual tourist and his needs.

It is often the case that developing countries perceive tourism as the best opportunity for economic development. However, over-dependence on tourism can also cause certain problems, including environmental, cultural and social problems that have a strong impact on the local population. In the non-economic area, more than in the economic area, we recognize the negative effects that tourism brings with its development. They, in turn, stem from mass, a fundamental feature of tourism as a socio-cultural phenomenon of today. This mass presence of tourists in certain tourist areas has led to the transformation of these areas, not only in the structure of activities, social and professional structure of the local population, in ecological and general spatial changes but also in changes in socio-cultural characteristics (Nunkoo et al., 2011). Tourism appears as a method of development and promotion of certain underdeveloped or poorly industrialized regions, where traditional activities are declining. Which means that tourism can replace activities that are slowly dying out, on which the survival and prosperity of the local population once depended. Tourism development provides an opportunity to preserve the community and slows down the process of approaching urban environments, and opportunities for earnings and development from tourism provide stability to community life. Tourism can positively affect the attitude of local self-government, but also the local population towards natural and cultural heritage.

There are numerous studies that have examined the attitudes and perceptions of the local population about tourism and tourism development. Most of the research relevant to this research problem is part of the foreign literature, while a smaller number is devoted to research in the field. Akis, Peristianis and Warner (1996) investigated the attitudes of the local population towards tourism development in Cyprus and found positive attitudes towards tourism development in most residents. Nejati, Mohameda and Omara (2014) studied the

attitudes of the local population on two tourist islands in Malaysia. They found some differences in the attitudes of the local population towards tourism. Jing (2017) found that the negative attitudes of the local population towards tourism development were related to the social problems brought by tourism, but also to the fact that the local population is not sufficiently involved in tourism development. Insufficient involvement in tourism development has resulted in a lack of economic benefits from tourism that the local population expects.

The authors of the paper conducted field research in rural areas of Vojvodina. The aim of the research was to determine the attitude of the local population about the importance of the development of rural tourism products in these areas. Also, the authors tried to determine the position on the positive and negative impacts of tourism on rural areas and the local population, as a correlation of demographic factors and the position on the effects of tourism on rural development. The initial hypotheses were set, which were finally confirmed. The local population generally considers tourism to be important for the overall rural development, but emphasizes both the positive and negative impact of tourism. SPSS AMOS software was used, version, 21.00, and the results of the research were obtained through SEM analysis.

The paper abounds in very interesting data and facts, with current research topics in the world that have not been covered in the District so far, and therefore gain more in its social significance. Based on the research data and the obtained results, it will be possible to see the real situation and possibilities of rural tourism development in this part of the country. Accordingly, it is possible to conduct similar and broader research on a given topic, and to construct strategic plans for the future development of rural tourism. The paper shows the importance of tourism in the rural development of Vojvodina, which the authors confirm with rich domestic and foreign literature, and similar research papers on the same topic.

What is characteristic of the rural tourist offer of the Republic of Serbia is that there is no single integration offer. This prevents marketing access to development, both at the level of rural tourist destinations and at the state level. The rural tourism market is growing, but at the same time the future of many rural areas is uncertain, conditioned by changes in agricultural practice (including outcomes of the Common Agricultural Policy in the European Union). Production is increasing and enabling better placement of agricultural products, handicrafts and products of old crafts, through board and non-board consumption.

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