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SCIENTIFIC REVIEW ARTICLE
doi:10.5937/ekonomika1502083M
Received: February 25, 2015
Accepted: March 26, 2015

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THE EFFECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM ON STARA PLANINA

Abstract

Rural tourism is a combination of different forms of tourism, which introduces visitors to life, art, culture and heritage of a region and is very suitable for the development of rural economy. The aim of this study is to detect the effects of rural tourism development on Stara Planina as well as the economic development of local communities with the possibility of sustainability of rural settlements and tourism development. One of the most important effects of rural tourism development on Stara Planina is the realization of economic profit. The development of rural tourism can stop the migration of young people through the creation of basic conditions for general, much higher comfort of rural settlements, and increase local jobs as well. With the development of rural tourism in the Stara Planina local people will be motivated to stay in the countryside. In such circumstances, young people can find not only economic, but also social and cultural reasons to continue living in rural areas.

Key words: Rural tourism, Stara Planina, economic development, employment, the local community

JEL classification: R10, Q26

ЕФЕКТИ РАЗВОЈА РУРАЛНОГ ТУРИЗМА НА СТАРОЈ ПЛАНИНИ

Апстракт

Рурални туризам је комбинација различитог облика туризма, који посетиоце упознаје са животом, уметношћу, културом и баштином одређеног краја и изузетно је погодан за развој руралне економије. Циљ овог рада је детектовати

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ефекте развоја руралног туризма на Старој планини као и економски развој локалне заједнице уз могућност одрживости руралних насеља и развоја туризма. Један од најважнијих ефеката развоја руралног туризма на Старој планини је остваривање економских профита. Развој руралног туризма може да заустави одлазак младих, кроз стварање елементарних услова за општи, знатно виши, комфор сеоских насеља, али и повечати запошљавање локалног становништва. Развојем руралног туризма на подручју Старе планине локално становништво ће бити мотивисано да остане на селу. У таквим околностима млади људи могу наћи не само економске, него и социо-културне мотиве да наставе живот у руралној средини.

Кључне речи: Рурални туризам, Стара планина, економски развој, запошљавање, локална заједница

Introduction

Protected nature and the environment in rural areas have always been attractive, and more recently they have attracted a large number of urban population, which has resulted in the increased interest in travelling to the countryside, so that villages and rural areas are now included in the circle of interest of an increasing number of tourists. According to the data, rural tourism accounts for 10-25% in all forms of tourism activities, so it can be concluded that the “story of rural tourism has begun in the rural area and in the future it will achieve a continuous rise” (Ruzić, 2012).

Rural tourism today is not the only means of revitalization of the abandoned rural areas, but it certainly is one of the major factors of the development of rural areas, which ensures their future sustainability through preservation, and opening of new job opportunities, increasing the diversity of occupations, preservation of landscape and nature as well as support to the rural crafts and tourist attractions.

In most European countries, rural population is increasingly accepting tourism development as a strategy of sustainable local development (Petrić, 2006). The development of rural tourism in many areas appears gradually, whether as a result of local entrepreneurs or growing businesses whose main task is to attract tourists, or the very tourists who discover that the area attracts the attention of visitors due to the activity to which the local entrepreneurs respond. The development of tourism in rural areas, according to Petrić (2006), is not just a matter of coincidence of tourist demands with local offers, but also the issue of the valuation of the local amenities. Rural areas are unique because of their spatial and socio-cultural identity. What is important is that the adequate practice of rural development calls for the understanding of the relationship people share with the natural features and phenomena around them (Chigbu, 2014).

Detecting the economic effects of rural tourism development on Stara Planina and economic community development are the main objectives of this research, with the possibility of sustainability of rural settlements and tourism development. If special attention is paid to the education of the local population in order to improve the quality of services with a tendency to increase the number of tourists, there will be conditions for higher quality

comfort of rural settlements, where locals, especially the younger population, have economic and other motives to continue living in the countryside.

The economic significance of rural tourism

The number of tourists now involved in this kind of tourism, according to Kalač (2013), is growing and developing in all types of rural areas. This kind of tourism includes a wide range of activities, services and amusement provided by farmers and peasants in order to attract tourists to their areas and thus obtain additional income.

Such a concept of tourism is not just about rural tourism or agro-tourism, but it also includes certain holidays, trips to rural areas and residential tourism (Kalač, 2013). According to Gašić et al. (2015) the development of tourism in rural areas aims to solve many economic issues related to the depopulation of areas caused by migration of rural population to urban areas. By striving to improve living conditions and environmental protection, the stability of the working age population increases, which allows the migration in the opposite direction, from urban to rural. Such activities contribute to the economic development of rural areas and have an impact on the future economic development of the entire region (Gašić et al. 2015).

The basic economic importance of this kind of tourism lies in tourist spending in the areas they visit, because in addition to the accommodation services, there are events, festivals, recreation, manufacture and sale of handicrafts as well as craft and agricultural products. This implies that tourist demand increasingly strives for avoiding the usual tourist destinations and there is a return to the traditional and typical values and authenticity, where new tourist products with new environmental, ecological and social parameters appear (Sanagustin and others, 2011). Therefore, the money earned by the tourists in their places of permanent residence is spent in the tourist areas. In this way, as the result of their consumption there are certain effects on the economy, both in the areas from which the tourists come and in the areas that tourists visit (Unković, Zečević, 2006). The positive economic impact of rural tourism can contribute and even provide much needed funds of the historical, cultural and natural heritage in local communities, (Vehbi, 2012).

The economic effects of tourist spending in specific areas of economy have direct or indirect effects.

The most important direct influences of rural tourism on economy are:

The impact on the social product and national income;

The impact on the development of economic activities that constitute the tourism industry;

The impact on the balance of payments of the country;

The impact on the employment of the population and standard of living;

The impact on investment activity and investment structure;

Impact on faster development of underdeveloped countries and regions.

In addition to the direct influence, the indirect influence of rural tourism on the economy deserves significant attention. The tourist spending that is directly implemented through activities of the tourism industry more or less affects all economic and non-economic activities. In this way, new jobs open and unemployment is automatically

reduced, which has been identified as one of the foremost benefits of rural tourism (Inskip, 1991). In order to achieve economic goals, there should be quality tourism services obtained, because it provides optimal satisfaction of the needs of domestic and foreign tourists on one hand, and the achievement of favorable economic results of operations of participants in satisfying of tourist needs on the other. In such circumstances, young people can find not only economic, but also social and cultural reasons to continue living in rural areas. Therefore, in countries with developed tourism offer more attention is paid to the development of rural tourism, which today constitutes one of the important components of the development of not only tourism, but also the integrated and sustainable development of the region as a whole (Muhi, 2013).

Considering that in the modern tourism the target of every tourist destination is to create a unique identity, or to differ from the competition, which is the basis for growth and development in a competitive market, (Gašić, 2013). That is the reason why special stress has been lately put on a “package” of tourist services. It offers tourists a unique and high-quality tourist service, which contains all aforementioned services offered to tourists in the places of their residence, during the transportation and on the spot of their temporary stay. For this unique service, travel agencies and other organizations that appear as bidders of the package of services form a unique sales price. (Bošković, 2009)

The controlled participation in rural tourism on Stara Planina can make a substantial income, both economic and social, to the majority of the population (Štetić, 2007). The lack of finance is often a stumbling block for many who live in this region, (Maksimović et al., 2015). The very tourist power that should be reflected in the economic and socio-cultural impact on the tourism in this area, which is lacking, can be found in the role of women in tourism in this region as well as the joint overcoming of the obstacles as threatening elements of rural tourism development, (Ghaderi and Henderson, 2012). Since the focus of this paper is economic effects, we will keep our focus on economic management tools for tourists on Stara Planina because, according to Petrić (2014), it is desirable to introduce management tools for tourists, which may be divided into four groups: institutional, economic tools, management tools and information technology. The basic economic tools can be: the difference in prices compared to other destinations, the collection of environmental tourist taxes taking into account that Stara Planina has been declared a national park, but they could also include the encouragement of both the public and private sectors that aims to increase the volume of visitors and the rational use of energy and other resources (Petrić, 2014).

The main tasks of economic development of rural tourism on Stara Planina according to Đekić and Vučić (2007) are as follows:

Curbing the migration from rural areas and the creation of new jobs;

Converting the production activities into a typical production according to the environmental strategies of rural development;

Develop new interests, new approaches and new farming methods;

Utilization of environmental resources through synergies and reduction of conflicting relations between agriculture and the environment;

The economic development of local communities and the general improvement of the quality of life.

In order to achieve the economic effect of rural tourism development on Stara Planina, the quality of offer and service should be seriously improved. Significant stress

should be put on the trainings of managers and all employees in order to improve their course of communication and management of tourist behavior and thus attract the attention of domestic and foreign visitors to Stara Planina. For this purpose, the training of local people to be included in the tourism sector should not be omitted, as well as the participation of local government into their implementation of sustainable rural tourism development on Stara Planina, as well as the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector of the tourism industry, especially by local entrepreneurs employing local population in all aspects of business operations. The offer of suitable accommodation and tourist facilities could significantly affect the attraction of foreign capital with the aim to develop all resources of Stara Planina. Good organization and coordination of all stakeholders of tourism policy will contribute to the growth and development of tourism on Stara Planina, all in order to achieve positive economic results and the prosperity of the local population.

The research methods

The study sample consists of 116 respondents from municipalities of Zajecar and Knjazevac, local government employees, tourism and catering sector, as the target group, but the survey also includes respondents employed in other sectors (culture, transport, agriculture, etc.) There are unemployed respondents randomly selected as well.

The study included 46% of women and 54% men. Of those surveyed 47% are residents of Knjazevac, and 53% are inhabitants of Zajecar. The percentage of the employees in local government is 29%, in the sector of tourism and catering 23% in other sectors (culture, transport, agriculture, etc.), 26% of respondents, as well as 22% of unemployed respondents.

As a research tool we used questionnaires. The survey consisted of closed questions, which indicate the economic effects of rural tourism development, and offered the answers of the respondents on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means “strongly disagree”, and 5 “strongly agree”.

The effects of rural tourism development on Stara Planina, covered by the questionnaire are:

- Improving the quality of life and standards of all development resources,
- The realization of economic profit,
- Preserving the integrity of the social community,
- Preserving the cultural integrity affirmation of the destination of Stara Planina,
- Preserving the rural environment and cultural heritage,
- Motivating the local population to remain in the countryside,
- The employment of local people in all aspects of business operation.

Results and discussion of the results

The following tables show the results of the conducted research on the effects of rural tourism development on Stara Planina.

Table 1. Improving the quality of the environment and of all development resources

	Local self-government	Tourism and hospitality	Other economic subjects	Unemployed	Total
Completely inconsistent	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Partially inconsistent	17,65%	15,38%	13,33%	23,08%	17,24%
Neutral	11,76%	0,00%	6,67%	15,38%	8,62%
Partly agree	23,53%	23,08%	33,33%	23,08%	25,86%
Strongly Agree	47,06%	61,54%	46,67%	38,46%	48,28%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100%

The percentage of respondents who totally agree is 48,28%, and most of them are employed in the tourism sector (61.54%), which shows that most respondents agreed that the improvement of environmental quality and the development of resources are effects of the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina. The percentage of neutral subjects is only 8.62%, while totally disagreeing respondents don't exist.

Table 2. The realization of economic profit

	Local self-government	Tourism and hospitality	Other economic subjects	Unemployed	Total
Completely inconsistent	17,65%	15,38%	0,00%	23,08%	13,79%
Partially inconsistent	5,88%	0,00%	0,00%	15,38%	5,17%
Neutral	5,88%	7,69%	13,33%	7,69%	8,62%
Partly agree	17,65%	23,08%	46,67%	15,38%	25,86%
Strongly Agree	52,94%	53,85%	40,00%	38,46%	46,55%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100%

An important effect of rural tourism development on Stara Planina is the realization of economic profits where the highest percentage of employees in the tourism and hospitality industry (53.85%) strongly agrees because it automatically implies a chance for greater profits. But the employees of the Local Government (52.94%) and employees in the sector of other undertakings (40%) strongly agree with it as well. The largest number of the unemployed (38.46%) also strongly agrees, because they see the chance for their employment in the development of rural tourism, even though a large number of the unemployed, 23.08%, is completely inconsistent and cannot see that the development of rural tourism can lead to the economic profit.

Table 3. Preserving the integrity of the social community

	Local self-government	Tourism and hospitality	Other economic subjects	Unemployed	Total
Completely inconsistent	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Partially inconsistent	29,41%	15,38%	6,67%	46,15%	24,14%
Neutral	11,76%	0,00%	20,00%	23,08%	13,79%
Partly agree	23,53%	30,77%	26,67%	7,69%	22,41%
Strongly Agree	35,29%	53,85%	46,67%	23,08%	39,66%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100%

Preserving the integrity of the social community is also an effect that occurs due to the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina as it is shown in Table 3. The highest percentage of employees in the tourism and hospitality industry (53.85%) and 46.67% of those employed in the sector of other undertakings totally agree with the statement that the preservation of the social integrity of the local community is one of the important effects of rural tourism development in Stara Planina, while there aren't any totally disagreeing respondents.

Table 4. Preserving the cultural integrity affirmation of the destination of Stara Planina

	<i>Local self-government</i>	<i>Tourism and hospitality</i>	<i>Other economic subjects</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Completely inconsistent</i>	17,65%	15,38%	0,00%	23,08%	13,79%
<i>Partially inconsistent</i>	11,76%	0,00%	6,67%	7,69%	6,90%
<i>Neutral</i>	11,76%	0,00%	13,33%	23,08%	12,07%
<i>Partly agree</i>	23,53%	46,15%	33,33%	23,08%	31,00%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	35,29%	38,46%	46,67%	23,08%	36,21%
<i>Total</i>	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100%

The largest number of the working population in the sector of other undertakings (46.67%) and 38.46% of the employed in tourism and hospitality completely agree that the preservation of cultural integrity affirmation of Stara Planina destinations is one of the effects of the development of rural tourism. As for the unemployed, they each pleaded differently on this matter, so that there are completely disagreeing 23.08%, neutral 7.69% , no partially inconsistent and fully consistent- 23.08%.

Table 5. The preservation of the rural environment and cultural heritage

	<i>Local self-government</i>	<i>Tourism and hospitality</i>	<i>Other economic subjects</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Completely inconsistent</i>	17,65%	15,38%	0,00%	23,08%	13,79%
<i>Partially inconsistent</i>	17,65%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	5,17%
<i>Neutral</i>	5,88%	0,00%	0,00%	7,69%	3,45%
<i>Partly agree</i>	11,76%	15,38%	33,33%	23,08%	20,69%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	47,06%	69,23%	66,67%	46,15%	56,90%
<i>Total</i>	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100%

The significant number of respondents, 56,90% fully agree that the preservation of the rural environment and cultural heritage is one of the important effects of the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina. The largest percentage is of the employees in the tourism and hospitality industry (69.23%), followed by 66.67% of the employed in the sector of other undertakings and employees in local government (47.06%) and even 46.15% of unemployed respondents, which is completely in accordance with the aforementioned statement.

Table 6. *Motivating the local population to remain in the countryside*

	<i>Local self-government</i>	<i>Tourism and hospitality</i>	<i>Other economic subjects</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Completely inconsistent</i>	11,76%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	3,45%
<i>Partially inconsistent</i>	23,53%	15,38%	6,67%	30,77%	18,97%
<i>Neutral</i>	5,88%	7,69%	13,33%	7,69%	8,62%
<i>Partly agree</i>	11,76%	7,69%	13,33%	15,38%	12,07%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	47,06%	69,23%	66,67%	46,15%	56,90%
<i>Total</i>	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100%

With the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina local people will be motivated to stay in the country and 56.90% of the respondents completely agree upon it (69.23% of the employed in the tourism and hospitality industry, 66.67% of the employed in other economic sectors, 47.06% of local government employees and 46.15% of the unemployed respondents).

Table 7. *Employment of local people in all aspects of business operation.*

	<i>Local self-government</i>	<i>Tourism and hospitality</i>	<i>Other economic subjects</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Completely inconsistent</i>	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
<i>Partially inconsistent</i>	23,53%	15,38%	0,00%	23,08%	15,52%
<i>Neutral</i>	0,00%	0,00%	20,00%	7,69%	6,90%
<i>Partly agree</i>	35,29%	30,77%	26,67%	15,38%	27,59%
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	41,18%	53,85%	53,33%	53,85%	50,00%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The employment of local people in all aspects of business operation is perhaps the most important effect of rural tourism development on Stara Planina, since 50% of the respondents completely agreed with this statement. Thus 53.85% of the unemployed respondents are fully in compliance with this because it is a chance for their employment, and the same number of the employees in the tourism and hospitality industry is completely in accordance with it, a little less, or 53.33% of the employed in the sector of other undertakings and 41.18% of local government employees also fully agree upon the statement that the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina improves the employment of local people in all aspects of business operations.

Conclusion

Stara Planina has good conditions for the development of rural tourism thanks to its geographical position, the varied landscape, cuisine, folklore, multinationality, rich cultural heritage. The great cultural value lies in the products of traditional crafts and handicrafts through which a rich heritage of local people is revealed. The natural beauty of Stara Planina

in combination with the culture, traditions, food specialties and music of Eastern Serbia can become a recognizable tourism brand, which contributes to the significant economic development and could improve the image of the region. One of the most important effects of rural tourism development in Stara Planina is the realization of economic profits. The development of rural tourism on Stara Planina can stop the emigration of young people through the creation of basic conditions for general, much higher comfort of the rural settlements. With the development of rural tourism on Stara planina local people will be motivated to stay in the countryside. In such circumstances, young people can find not only economic, but also social and cultural reasons to continue living in rural areas. The development of rural tourism on Stara Planina would improve the employment of the local population.

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