

ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF RURAL TOURISM IN EASTERN SERBIA BASED ON THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mladan Maksimović, Dragan Mihajlović, Snežana Urošević

***Abstract:** Rural areas are those areas that are rich in preserved natural and cultural resources necessary for the development of tourism. However, these areas are significantly lagging behind economic development compared to the urban areas. Given that in recent years, more attention is paid to tourism as one of the major factors for the economic development of rural areas. Rural tourism in Eastern Serbia should contribute to the preservation of the rural environment and cultural heritage, but also to economically motivate local residents to remain in the villages. This form of tourism could contribute significantly to the protection of nature, but also to provide funds for the survival and development of the village. The aim of this paper is to point out that rural tourism on the concept of sustainable development which may be the most important component of the revitalization of villages in eastern Serbia.*

***Keywords:** Rural tourism, sustainable development, economic development, rural area.*

Introduction

Rural tourism is an area that is interesting to tourists because returns man from the urban nature to the nature that has always belonged to him. Protected nature and the environment in rural areas has always attracted, and more recently attracts a large number of urban population, because of increasing interest in travel to the village, a village and rural landscapes enter the circle of interest of an increasing number of tourists. According to data that rural tourism accounts for 10-25% in all forms of tourism activities, it can be concluded that the "story of rural tourism began in the rural areas and that will achieve in the future a continuous rise" (Ružić, 2012: 217-238).

Rural tourism is an important instrument of economic development of the mountain, and other rural areas throughout the country. These areas are attractive for tourists due to the benefits of the

rural environment with historical tradition and with all ethnic and geographic characteristics. The offer of suitable accommodation and tourist facilities in rural areas, is becoming an increasingly popular source of income for the local population, and also the development opportunity for the local community.

In many countries of the European Union in strategy of development regions and rural areas is included rural tourism, which helps in keeping the population in the village, creating jobs and contributing to the socio-economic progress (residual) areas (Muhi, 2013:129-137).

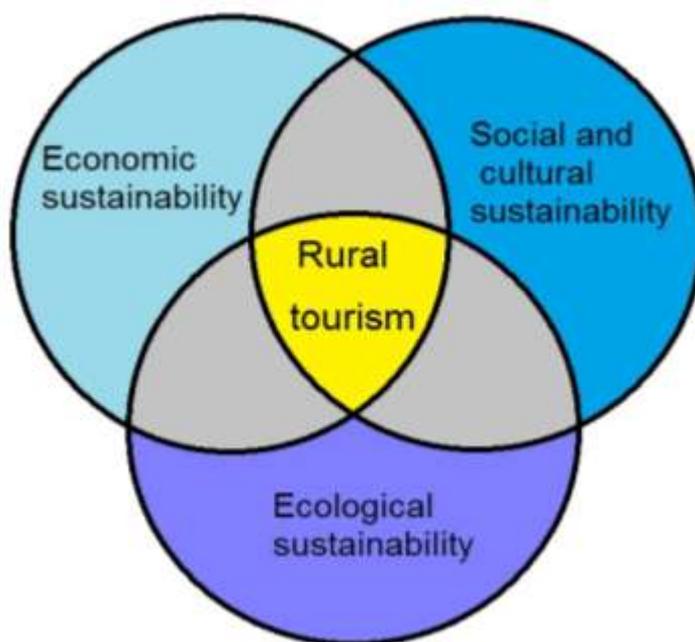
If we look at all with the role of sustainable development, which we explain such a development path that does not have negative impacts on the environment, that way no doubt about the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, there is doubt about its sustainability when it comes to the environment. Rural tourism development can adversely affect an additional pressure on the local community, with regard to infrastructure problems, changes in the steady rhythm of life as well as the introduction of new practices in the local tradition. Therefore, this paper explains the importance of rural tourism for the local community through the preservation of environmental quality and all development resources, preserving the integrity of the social community and achievement of economic profit.

THEORETICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL TOURISM

Basic resources for the development of rural tourism are, of course, rural areas. They represent a very large and still little exploited tourist potential. Meeting the needs of city residents for peace and the need for recreation outdoors, can best be realized in rural areas.

The term rural tourism, is used for cases when the rural culture is a key component of the offered tourism product. Specific attempt to provide to the visitor a personal contact, feeling the physical environment in rural areas and, to the extent possible, that he be given the opportunity to participate in activities, traditions and lifestyle of the local population.(<http://www.raris.org>) This allows the visitor a unique way to experience the web of life of nature, culture and people. Rural tourism is based on the principles of sustainability and involves a range of activities and services that people in rural areas are organized precisely on the basis of the elements that characterize rural areas. This implies that the visitor enjoys the authentic, original experiences and

return to the roots and essence of rural life (Đorđević Milošević, & other 2012:47). The offer in rural tourism includes not only the visible features of nature, architecture, folk literature, gastronomy, but to experience the unique multi-dimensional web of life achieved through personal contact with the local population, which makes rural tourism unique by giving it a unique and invisible features such as traditional hospitality, customs, culture, relationships with nature, culture, communication, beliefs and legends of local people of different nationalities and religions, the populations at particular area has developed a specific way of life. The very vision of sustainable rural tourism, is a balance of economic sustainability, social and cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability, as shown in Figure No.1.



*Figure 1. The vision of sustainable rural tourism
Source: (Maksimović & other, 2015:163)*

Rural tourism is a combination of many different aspects of the experience, sharing and presenting rural life. These rural experience can be defined in terms of rural activities and experiences found. The combination of these forms is the essence of rural tourism.

Rural activities have different levels of complexity, which can be summarized in two main aspects:

- level of engagement of visitors activities in the rural environment;
- level of entertainment value and educational level.
- The level of engagement in the activities of visitors in a rural setting varies from very active to very passive. World trends show that fun and educational activities are becoming increasingly important in the design of new destinations and this is a key element for the differentiation of destinations.

RURAL TOURISTIC RESORT

One of the rural settlements in attractive rural areas, which have a certain level of infrastructural facilities and transport accessibility and preserved architectural heritage, can be involved in the tourist industry. One of the criteria is that towns and rural areas have natural and anthropogenic tourist resources for attractive presentation and use for tourism promotion. Other criteria include human resources. In fact, rural areas, especially in Central Serbia are in process of depopulation, in certain rural settlements are losing permanent residents, or the average age is over 60 years. In other words, is crucial in some instances, the availability of skilled workforce of residents in the village. Only then can be developed tourist functions of villages and then we can talk about rural resorts in which visitors comes to leisure, to temporarily return to nature and traditional way of life. Most often in these villages are coming residents of large cities for which village is touristic cultural framework in which it takes a life different from their everyday life in the city. In order to be a tourist village, it must meet the following criteria:

- Agricultural production is at the village primary production activity. Indigenous people engaged in everyday activities, while tourists witness and participant of a number of acts done by the local population;
- Rural households, houses and farm must comply with the ambient unit of villages and landscapes;
- Introducing the traditional way of life of the rural traditions (villages, meetings, feasts), culture, food, dress, as well as with traditional crafts (weaving, furs, traditional footwear, pottery, quilts crafts);
- Tourist live with the host under the same roof and over him is included in the life of the family and the entire village, which stay in the country gets full meaning;

- The local population is not isolated from the tourists, or becomes nameless provider of travel services to certain working hours. Still dealing with the affairs of the estate as usual, carries out activities related to tourism, and treat tourists as the locals.

The division of rural touristic village according to tourist facilities, according certain authors, can be:

- Self rural touristic resort with a complete tourist and cultural offer (accommodation, meals, other tourist and cultural facilities);
- Rural touristic resort with partial tourist and cultural offerings included in other segmented forms of tourism demand (spa, winter and summer tourist centers, transit corridors, cultural and natural heritage, etc.);
- Rural touristic complex with the manifestation of tourist-cultural offer (fairs, trade fairs, parades, festivals, competitions, colonies);
- Excursion rural touristic settlements (villages near the emitting city centers);
- Other villages (villages engaged in providing services: local food store or food for the winter, keeping pets, picking herbs, teas processing, giving courses - weaving, knitting, crocheting, storage, etc.) (Maksimović & other, 2015:165)

Since natural resources are only one part of the natural conditions, it is the gift of nature, which is used in the reproduction process to create new useful values, (Nikolić & other, 2013:25). While terms such as „natural capital" has long been established in the literature, specific term „rural capital" has entered in academic discourse only in the last few years. As such there is no definition about which everyone agrees. This term is first used in the UK by the Agency for the village, as a conceptual way of connecting their two programs. The first of these programs included the establishment, „ Initiative for Land Management, "which aimed to highlight the problems faced by manufacturing, promoting the sustainable management of agricultural land. Rural capital,, is the basis of rural development, rural villages and market towns. "On the one hand, this definition can be considered to some degree simplified, but it is worth describing in what rural capital as something that encompasses the various components of the village. This can be primarily natural components, such as wildlife, primarily constructed, such as rural settlements, or primarily social, as well as local cultural traditions. Furthermore, the main components of rural capital may be tangible or receptive. An integral elements of rural capital are:

- Landscape;
- Flora and Fauna;
- Biodiversity;
- Geology of soil;
- Air and air quality;
- Hedge and fencing fields;
- Agricultural buildings;
- The rural village of isolated settlements to market cities;
- The historical features, such as historic buildings, remnants of the industry;
- Trails, paths, streets and roads;
- Streams, rivers, ponds and lakes;
- Water and quality of water;
- Woodlands, forests and plantations;
- Distinctive local cultures, languages, costumes, food, crafts, festivals, traditions, way of life. (Stanojević, 2007:40)

On the different elements of rural capital can be thought of as key components of the value base of rural tourism. This means that the quality of the experience of rural tourism depends on the quality of rural capital that supports it. This is not to suggest that the rural capital of the only determinant of the quality of the experience of rural tourism. Another determining factor includes the availability of services, a wealth of information, a high standard of service and care of the visitor. It is also important to recognize the importance of rural capital goes further than its role in rural tourism. Here we identify four broad dimensions of the importance of rural capital:

- Providing advantages in the market for agricultural producers, food processors and distributors;
- Presentation of rural capital as a value in terms of cultural heritage related busines;
- Provision of primary services, for example, wind power, flood control and recreational resources, etc.;
- The factor of attractiveness for inward investment, (Maksimović & other, 2015:166)

SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL TOURISM

At the time of increasing urbanization and globalization, increasingly are gaining in importance and specific indigenous settlements that faithfully reflect the spirit and tradition of the past. Therefore, rural areas are becoming more specific, cultural or tourist importance and attractiveness.

The main motives of tourist traveling in recreational settings are tied to the desire of tourists to learn about the cultural and historical heritage of certain regions. Also, tourist trips are linked to the various types of educational needs as well as exploring the habits, customs and the way of life of the inhabitants of certain regions.

The social importance of tourism can affect various aspects such as:

- Cultural and educational,
- Health,
- Better understanding between people from different areas, etc.

Regarding cultural aspects, a large number of tourists is included in tourist trips with the desire to know the historical and cultural heritage of other regions, as well as the achievements of various fields of art in these regions. Because a large number of tourists visiting museums, historical monuments, art galleries and various festivals. This way creates the conditions for a better understanding between people from different areas with different cultures and historical heritage. Therefore, special attention was paid to the cultural and historical heritage of certain areas, which is conditioned by the desire to be adjusted both domestic and foreign tourists to come to this region.

In addition to the above-mentioned importance of tourism for culture, it is necessary emphasize and its impact on education speaking populace that is included in tourist flows. With that way it is possible to spread the impact of tourism domain. Traveling from one region to the othert, tourists are more familiar with the geographic, climatic, anthropological, social and other conditions in the population of these areas. This way increases the general cultural level of tourists, where it also creates the conditions for a better understanding between people from different areas.

In addition to the cultural and educational aspects, it should be noted that tourism, which basically allows the recreation of the population in physical and psychological terms, performs a significant impact on improving the health and working capacity of the population.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF RURAL TOURISM

Basic economic importance of rural tourism is located in tourist spending in those areas that they visit. The money earned by the tourists in their places of permanent residence is spent in tourist areas. In this way, there is a result of their consumption arise where certain economic effects on the economy. How to the areas from which tourists coming, so to the areas that tourists visit. (Unković, Zečević, 2006:39)

Economic effects of tourist spending in specific areas of the economy have direct or indirect effects.

From direct impact that rural tourism performs on the economy, the most important are:

- The impact on the social product and national income;
- The impact on the development of economic activities that constitute the tourism industry;
- impact on the country's balance of payments;
- The impact on employment of the population and living standard;
- The impact on investment activity and structure of investment;
- The impact on the rapid development of underdeveloped countries and regions.

Besides's direct, significant attention deserves and indirect influence of rural tourism on the economy. Consumption of tourists that are directly realized through the activity of the tourism industry more or less secure affects all economic and non-economic activities.

In order to achieve economic goals, should strive for providing quality tourism services because it provides optimal satisfaction of the needs of domestic and foreign tourists on the one hand, and the achievement of favorable economic results of operations of participants in meeting the needs of tourism on the other.

Lately, special importance is "package" of tourist services. It offers tourists a unique and high-quality tourist services, which contains all the services that are offered to tourists in the places of their residence, in the process of transportation and the tourist town where a temporary shelter. For this unique service, travel agency and stresses many other organizations that appear as providers of a service package, forming a unique sales price. (Bošković, 2009:25)

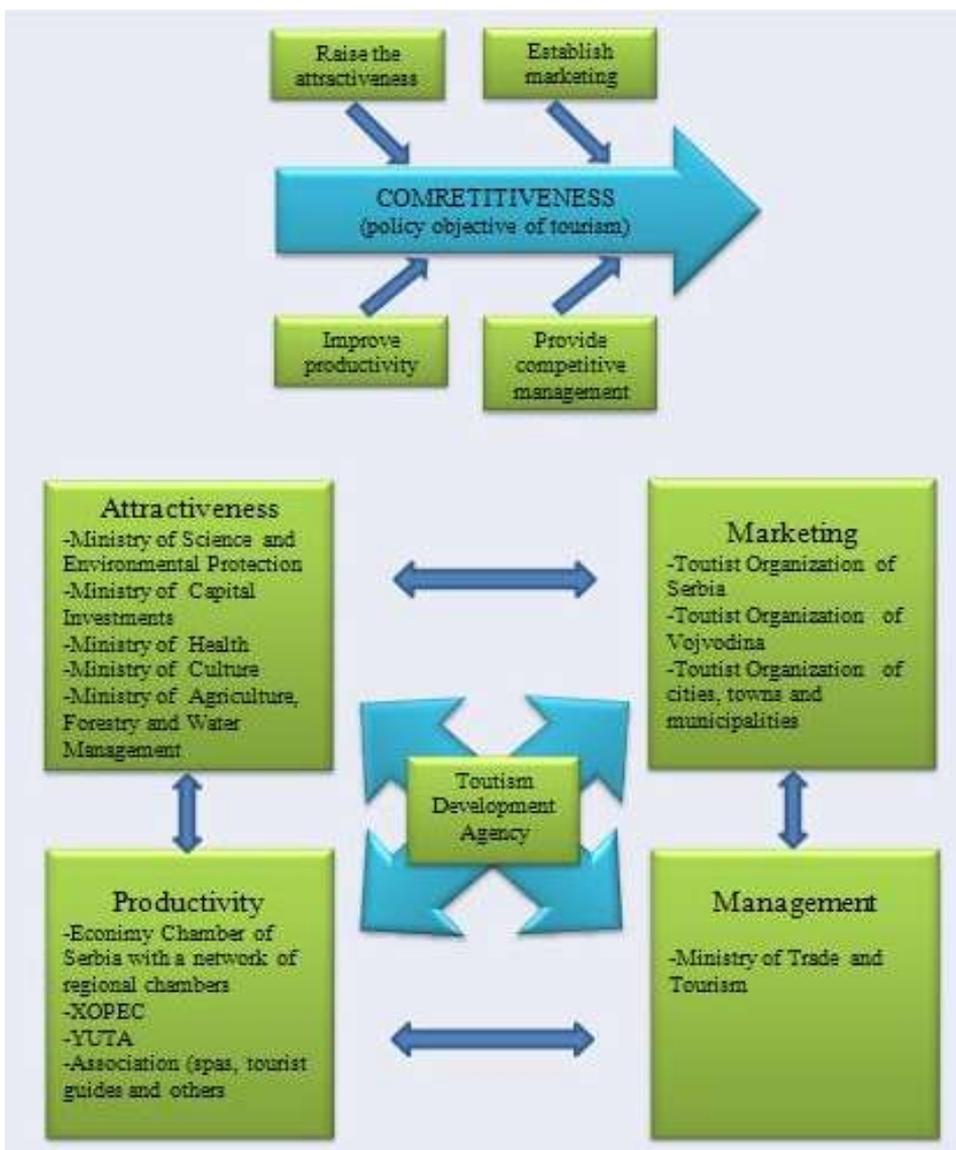


Figure.2. Management and administration in tourism

Source: Strategija razvoja turizma republike Srbije (Službeni glasnik RS, br. 91/2006) <http://mtt.gov.rs/download/Strategija%20razvoja%20turizma.cit.pdf>

Rural tourism is a real asset of revitalization of many smaller and larger rural spatial entities. Tourism development in these areas can stop the departure of young people, through the creation of basic conditions for general, much higher comfort of rural settlements. In such circumstances, young people can find not only economic, but also socio-cultural motivations to continue to live in rural areas. Therefore,

in countries with developed tourist 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 integrated and sustainable development of the region as a whole (Muhi, 2013:129-137).

POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN EASTERN SERBIA

Contemporary trends in world tourism are looking for areas with authentic or minimally preserved environment. Chances of Serbia are the country's diverse and preserved nature in the direction of the development of eco and rural tourism. The commitment to these types of tourism and unambiguous quality of the natural environment of rural areas of all Balkan countries, numerous specific Serbia are a good way towards the ultimate goal-formulating strategies for sustainable tourism development (Milanović, 2008:97-105).

A large number of rural areas in the Republic of Serbia is characterized by depopulation and economic underdevelopment, while urban centers recorded a higher concentration of population and economic activity. This trend is negatively affecting the development, it is necessary to develop programs, projects and future directions for the sustainable development of rural areas, in accordance with their specific characteristics, economic and non-economic functions which have in the economy and society, as well as the demands of the domestic and international environment, whose the impact of is inevitable.

In order to encourage young people to stay and live and work in rural areas, it is necessary to increase the attractiveness of these areas for investment.

An important priority for the sustainable development of rural tourism is the reconstruction and development of rural infrastructure (roads, water supply, sewerage, electricity, information and telecommunication services, etc.), Which has a large socio-economic and ecological significance. In addition, cross-border projects can significantly contribute to a better use of local resources, for example, a common road infrastructure, energy networks, tourist facilities, etc. (Ristić, 2013:237)

Creating a stimulating environment from the state for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship in rural areas (tax breaks, subsidies, loans on favorable

terms, etc.) Contributes to the diversification of the rural economy and keep young people in the countryside, in agriculture and non-agricultural occupations. Although there is a strategy of development of competitive and innovative small and medium-sized enterprises, it is important to adopt a new and better strategic document in this area for the next period.

The programs that can be implemented in rural areas, are noted for their production of special types of bread, biscuits, pastry and confectionery products, production of traditional culinary specialties, ecological packaging of crop residues, the production of juices (fruit and vegetable), production of quality chutney, ketchup, potato chips, mashed potatoes, production of dried vegetables and spices, cultivation and processing of mushrooms, plants for fruit (sweet, preserves, pasteurized fruit brandies, liqueurs, vinegar, fruit juices, syrups, teas, dried fruit), wine production, poultry processing plants meat and eggs (quality hot dogs, salami, pate, mayonnaise and concentrated soup), production and processing of honey bee products (royal jelly, propolis, wax), production of high-quality dairy products (cheese, sour cream, buttermilk, yogurt, sour cream: sweet, sour with peppers), cultivation, processing and packaging of medicinal and aromatic plants, production of herbal teas and essential oils, cultivation and processing of wild animals, breeding ostriches, snails and chinchilla, processing of forest products, the production of healthy food, medicines and dietary products based on medicinal plants (Ristić, 2013:238).

In particular, organic agriculture can make a strong contribution to the sustainable development of rural areas, because it is socially, economically and environmentally friendly (sustainable). In the Republic of Serbia have, in recent years, increased the area under organic production, although the first steps in the development of organic production dating back to 1990. In doing so, dominated by fruits and crops, with the growth of production of grains and oilseeds, which are in high demand in the international market for organic products. Most of these products are exported, especially in the EU (mainly in Germany, France, Britain and Italy). More state and non-state organizations, institutions and associations support the farms involved in organic production. Based on the report of authorized inspection organizations, in 2012, in the Republic of Serbia is about 1.000 manufacturers were involved in organic production (or were in the process of conversion). Over 20 companies, whose main activity is processing of conventional products, and has an extra line for processing of organic products, and certain primary producers engaged

in the processing (Berenji & other, 2013:2). In addition, consumers in the Republic of Serbia are not sufficiently informed about organic production. For the next period, the main task of the state in the field of organic production is to create an environment conducive to investment in this area, but it should encourage specific products deficient in the world, and especially in the EU, such as certain types of fruits and vegetables, oil seeds, cereals, bulbs, non-GMO soybeans, etc..

Eastern Serbia has good conditions for the development of rural tourism thanks to its geographical position, the varied landscape, cuisine, folklore, multinationality, rich cultural heritage. Great cultural value have produced the old crafts and handicrafts through which introduces a rich heritage of local people. The natural beauty of the Iron Gate, Stara Planina, Homoljske mountains and many other attractive destinations, combined with the culture, traditions, culinary specialties and music of Eastern Serbia can become a recognizable tourism brand, which contributed to significant foreign exchange income and improve the image of the region and the state.

A STRATEGY OF BRANDING OF RURAL TOURISM

The strategy for the development of rural tourism brand includes the following strategy:

- creating a unique brand of rural tourism at national level which combines the overall branding and in that should fit the rural activities and rural accommodation in Serbia.
- unified brand of rural tourism should fit into the overall positioning of Serbia under the slogan "Where tradition meets with nature".
- underpin rural products that already exist (such as, for example, Ruth Roman emperors or blower festival in Guca) and use them as a force on which to build the brand of rural tourism. rural activity which has already attracted people in Serbian villages should be used as an input for the development of tourism brand.
- Use symbols for rural tourism development and strengthening brand.
- Development of regional brands of rural tourism, which were consolidated under a national brand, but also offer a diversity of different clusters of rural tourism (Master plan 2011:109).

MARKETING TOOLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM

Strategic development of rural tourism and tourist valorization of rural areas necessarily belong to the field of marketing, especially in the area of creating rural tourism product and its promotion in the country and abroad. Marketing management of rural tourism encounters several specifics that need to be seen not only in making marketing plan, but in the beginning - during the strategic planning process. (Bolfek & other 2013:77)

Both domestic and international experience shows that individual units of agro-tourism too limited to independently use marketing tools, and highlights the importance of marketing networking of all stakeholders, defining its basic level and strategic marketing objectives at certain levels. In this way, the marketing networking to be applied:

- at the local level (city / municipality) - definition of individual marketing activities within the marketing strategy Tourism Cluster,
- at the level of the Tourist Cluster, which defines the basic tourist product which cluster develops marketing visibility within the umbrella brand,
- At the regional level, which defines the umbrella brand of tourism product consists of tourism products of individual clusters and
- At the state level, which defines the total (integrated) For the product of the country as a whole. (Bolfek & other 2013:77)

Rural tourism product is formed as a combination of agro-tourism and other forms of rural tourism. At the same time as the most important resource creates a product where the Tourist appear the following elements: agriculture and agricultural resources where agro-tourism wearer, climate and natural attractiveness, local custom, local communities, cultures and cultural resources. Tourist attractions and amenities - pedestrian and bicycle tours, cultural events, exhibitions and fairs of local products and souvenirs. The creation of products is important and "Tourism infrastructure" - access roads, tourist signs, landscaping streets, local roads, bike paths and the like. In this way it brings marketing strategy as part of the development strategy of rural tourism, which is making an important public role of the tourism sector, in particular the system of tourist boards, associations (consortium) of agro-tourism and others. The implementation of marketing strategies must be used and the individual marketing tools (such as Internet sites

of some of the agritourism, etc.), But every serious promotional and marketing activity should take place at higher levels, in accordance with the above outlined marketing concept. Particularly important are leaflets, brochures for individual products and for the overall rural tourism and e-marketing. It is important that promomaterijali contain all the information necessary for tourists.

Conclusion

Rural development of eastern Serbia is essentially the integration of agricultural development and tourism development in rural areas. Local sustainable development strategies need to successfully identify the available resources and based on them to define possible the most successful economic activities which have the capacity to contribute to the well-being of the local community. Increasing the competitiveness of rural tourism involves the modernization of agricultural holdings in order to ensure the requirements for food quality and other standards, which is essentially a prerequisite for increasing income in rural areas. Building local capacity for development shall be included partnership of all stakeholders as part of the activities for sustainable development of rural tourism. Farms as producers of local products, and also the service providers in rural areas, because of the attractiveness of the products as well as cultural heritage have the highest chance of developing rural tourism on the concept of sustainable development.

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NOTES ON THE AUTHOR

Mladjan Maksimovic, MSc in Management, a PhD student of the Faculty of Management in Zajecar, Megatrend University Belgrade. 19000 Zajecar, Republic of Serbia, Tel: +381 64 1479793; E-mail: mladjan21@yahoo.com. Main field of research: sustainable development, renewable energy sources, management, rural tourism.

Dragan Mihajlović - Megatrend University, Faculty of Management, Zajecar

Snežana Urošević - University of Belgrade, Technical Faculty in Bor, Bor