



Centre for Research on Settlements and Urbanism

Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning

Journal homepage: <http://jssp.reviste.ubbcluj.ro>



# Specific Features of Rural Tourism Destinations Management

Snežana ŠTETIĆ<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Novi Sad, PMF, College of Tourism, Belgrade, SERBIA

E-mail: [snegics@gmail.com](mailto:snegics@gmail.com)

**Keywords:** *rural tourism, management, positioning, local community, quality*

## ABSTRACT

Tourism is an activity that can have a significant impact on economic, social, functional and physiognomic structure of rural areas. Rural areas have a special position as areas of excellence, as well as ecological oases which are the foundations of traditional culture and ethno-cultural heritage. Tourism in rural areas is now a reality, needs and desires of tourists, but also the holder of an instrument of rural development. Rural tourism combines different forms of tourism and therefore represents an opportunity for the involvement of different segments of the local community to participate in the implementation of tourism development. Rural tourism is an important component of integrated and sustainable rural development and revitalization, as well as the missing component in encouraging the development of local markets for agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural areas, as well as a special stimulus to employment. Thus it is possible to contribute to the development of local communities. Rural tourism is a very broad concept that includes not only vacation in the village, but all other activities in rural areas. It should be noted that pressures exist between the successful development of tourism and the attractiveness of rural regions. Rural tourism destination that wishes to take a good position on domestic and international tourism market should be guided in accordance with the basic principles of sustainable development while respecting the requirements of customers for maximum quality resources and services offered. This is why there should be an extremely careful and thoughtful approach to research and assess the management of rural tourism destination. A new concept of tourism destination management system adopted an approach according to which environmental, physical and social factors are linked to different networks and an institutional structure. Traditionally, the management of rural destinations should represent the interests of local communities. If all stakeholders are firing together when determining what you really want from tourism and how they want to sell, they will all be better off.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Basic motives that drive millions of people to be involved in tourism developments are rest and recreation, nature, climate, cultural and historical monuments, history, customs, folklore ... These motives can have regional, national or international character. More and more new prospective or just developed destinations appear aside from famous tourism destinations. They start to connect with tourism through their attractive, receptive and communicative factors along with the development of local environment. Many of them are in rural areas and

according to their potentials and valorisation they begin the development of different forms of tourism. In this way unique tourism destinations are being created in rural areas.

Rural tourism destinations are facing growing challenges in both domestic and international markets. The success of tourism development in rural areas depends on the ability of local communities as well as the tourism industry to attract as many tourists as possible and preserve resources for future generations. Destination development is the key to the preservation of natural and cultural resources that tourism depends on. Therefore, the interaction between public and

private sectors and local population is extremely important. In this way all the stakeholders together can manage both local and global impacts more efficiently,

Traditionally, the management of a rural destination should represent the interests of a local community. Their mission is to develop villages and to create the image of rural destinations aimed at attracting and increasing the number of visitors. The rural tourism destination that wants to gain a good position in domestic and international tourism market should be led by basic principles of sustainable development, respecting the requirements of clientele for maximum quality of the resources and services offered. Exactly, this is why the research and assessment of rural tourism destination management must be approached extremely carefully and thoughtfully. If all stakeholders are acting together when determining what they really want from tourism and how they want to promote and sell it, they will all benefit. A new concept of tourism destination management is adopting a system of the approach where environmental, physical and social factors are connected with different networks, and institutional structures. Because of that, effective development of a rural tourism destination is very important for their future.

## **2. RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT**

Tourism development affects the whole area considering the characteristics and impacts of global tourism. By being engaged in tourism many parts of rural areas that have been "hidden" acquire an opportunity for the development. However, we cannot immediately talk about the emergence of a tourism destination because evolving a potential into a tourism destination depends on many factors, in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Discovering rural areas of preserved environment which also has attractive motifs is only the beginning of the possible creating a tourism destination. Their further 'destiny' also depends on planning and the intensity of tourism destination development.

Tourist movements caused by natural attractions are becoming increasingly important. Environment pollution has affected the redistribution of tourist movements towards ecological areas, and has thus provided an opportunity for the development of those countries that do not have 'an exit' to the sea. The spatial development of tourism indicates its complexity and complementarity. The development of a rural tourism destination affects both, the economic trends and the change of geographical image as well as the change of local population behaviour.

Tourism resources affect the attractiveness and selection of tourism destinations. Natural and

anthropogenic motifs located in the observed area, along with the material basis for tourism development, have an impact on creating tourism destinations with higher or lower quality for tourism development. Tourism destinations balance each other and compete with one another. It often happens that the area becomes 'too small and inadequate' for the increasing number of visitors. If the local community recognizes all the advantages and threats arising from tourism in time, this process will not occur. However, frequently this is not recognized in time, which affects the inadequate development of a tourism destination and often leads to its disappearance from the tourist scene. Positive and negative impacts of tourism are intertwined, and planning above all affects their strength and dominance.

The attractiveness of a tourism destination can have effect on a wider or narrower area. This is primarily influenced by the quality of the area and its equipment for tourist needs. Bearing this in mind, we can talk about creating primary and secondary tourism destinations. Primary tourism destinations are the ones that can attract many tourists through their attractiveness.

These destinations attract a large number of guests because they meet basic cultural and recreational needs of the visitors through their attractive, receptive, and transportation factors. Secondary tourism destinations possess certain attractiveness for short stays, which affects the number of tourists staying there and the length of their stay. These are also the sites that are on transit routes or very close to primary tourism destinations. In fact, most of their development depends on the development of primary tourism destinations. However, we cannot say that they are less important, as they often complement tourist offer of primary tourism destinations [7].

Secondary tourism destinations also include settlements that are located near roads or larger urban centres. Unlike these, other rural areas emerge sporadically as the potential areas for tourism development.

## **3. SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION**

A tourism destination is consists of its attributes and the degree of their use. Taking this into account, we can discuss whether it is a potential or a developed rural tourism destination. Essentially, the consideration of both internal and external factors in the surrounding of rural tourism destination is important. Thus, a true picture of the site and its role is created in domestic and international tourism market. Focusing on the characteristics and typology of a tourist destination the question arises: What is it that directs visitors to a rural tourism destination?

Undoubtedly, tourism and space are inseparable concepts in the realization of tourist movements. Tourism emergence and development are associated with geographic area and its attributes.

Therefore it is necessary to understand different types of areas and their features that have influenced in creating well-known and recognized tourism destinations.

Table 1. Attributes of a tourism destination.

DESTINATION TYPOLOGY	FEATURES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
TOWN	- cultural - religious - historical	- historical monuments - cultural institutions - sports grounds
BUSINESS DESTINATION	- congress centres - business centres	- business institutions
BEACH DESTINATION	- beaches and water sports - sports activities	- natural resources - constructed facilities
ISLAND DESTINATION	- nature - specific culture (religion)	- natural resources - anthropogenic motifs
MOUNTAIN DESTINATION	- mountain sports - hiking, trekking <b>- agriculture products</b> <b>- farmers' jobs</b>	- natural resources - built infrastructure <b>- natural environment</b> <b>- ethno-social characteristics</b>
<b>RURAL DESTINATION</b>	<b>- handicrafts</b> <b>- recreation</b>	<b>- gastronomy</b>
CULTURAL AND HISTORIC DESTINATION	- culture and history - religion	- anthropogenic motifs - sacral buildings
SPA DESTINATION	- rest and recovery - treatment	- curative springs - climatic resort

Source: S. Štetić, D. Šimičević (2009), *Menadžment turističke destinacije*, Srpsko geografsko društvo, Beograd

In order to become a potential tourism product it is necessary that a rural tourism destination should possess an appropriate level of attractiveness, i.e. a number of attractive motifs that will be major drivers of this sector development so as to attract a large number of tourists.

Often, the reasons why tourists visit a destination are suitable climate or specific relief with diverse flora and fauna. In addition, unusual landscapes, recreation centres and areas with rich cultural heritage also have an impact on the tourist turnover.

In planning the tourism development in an area that wants to develop rural tourism it is necessary to establish basic elements for evaluation. The most commonly cited are three basic elements:

- attractiveness of motifs;
- geographic position;
- the distance from tourists' residential areas.

Every area must have a high appealing power for people eager to spend time in leisure, recreation, cultural needs etc.

The question that arises is how to make a difference regarding the attractiveness of motifs. Sometimes this is visibly clear, by comparing the effect

intensity and motifs with facilities and phenomena of the same kind.

Clear criteria must be established by which a hierarchy of the appropriate attractiveness of motifs will be carried out, thus providing the classification of motives into those with local or global significance.

The simplest division is into natural and anthropogenic motifs. However, as Ž. Jovičić (1988) states, according to their origin natural motifs are divided into geomorphological, climatic, artistic, environmental, event and landscape ones. The same author deems that according to the size and forms of attractive effects, the motifs may be independent, complex and complementary. The complex motifs are characterized by several attractive attributes, which also possess various opportunities for tourist visits, while complementary ones intensify the effect of independent motifs. Both rural and within them village areas have always been dynamic, but not sufficiently used entities.

At the turn of the century the need for new products was intensified in the tourism industry.

It is the primary driver of the new view on a rural area and there is an increased awareness that economic and social changes are needed in these areas resulting from many factors, such as:

- movements of population from rural to urban areas at the global level;
- increased participation of tertiary activities at the global level;
- exceptional increase in tourist movements<sup>1</sup>;
- damages of the biosphere (including environmental degradation);
- volatile nature of rural / agricultural business and employment;
- social and demographic changes affecting families and households;
- providing services in rural areas (compared to urban areas).

These changes include very demanding challenges that cannot be solved by the community itself. Traditional approaches to natural resources management must be changed, and tourism is one of the sectors that may affect these changes.

#### 4. SELECTION OF RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION

Tourism destinations and their image are often the basis for tourism development. Therefore, all changes occurred in the tourism market are also reflected through their participation in the total foreign exchange inflows of a country. Changes towards new markets, shorter and more frequent travels, and specific forms of tourism include an increasing number of tourist destinations. Thus, in order to create different tourist product new spaces should be found or the existing ones should be restructured. New destinations, very often, will provide new experiences to tourists at a lower price, which is a positive element of motivation. They will also increase the selection, which makes tourist movements seem more interesting and attractive. Therefore, in the development of a tourism destination and the creation of its concept it must be borne in mind that a site turns into selection. It can be observed and studied in three levels:

*The selection of a rural tourism destination:*

- selection of place (at home);
- the way of making decisions (in relation to the motivation and needs);
- related to prices;
- related to the promotion;
- related to the image;
- related to the way of purchase ...

*The accessibility of a rural tourism destination:*

- considering tourism-geographic position;
- considering the length of the travel;
- considering the means of transportation ...

*Stay in a rural destination:*

- regarding pleasure;

- regarding experience;
- regarding memory ...

According to these elements, the rural tourism destination that wants to monitor and actively participate in modern concepts of tourism development has to create an image and make proper positioning in the market in relation to tourism consumers, competition and the global tourism market.

Raising awareness about the destination is a concept that is particularly important in rural and village areas and it represents an identity creation that makes rural (village) environment distinctive compared to other rural (village) communities and larger cities. Raising special awareness about a particular site is influenced by:

- natural factors and natural resources;
- cultural factors – population, tradition, customs, festivals and events, history and heritage, crafts, gastronomy;
- social factors;
- physical factors of the ambience, such as infrastructure, signs, marks;
- awareness about the true character and values of a site, the links with the past, religious significance and - aesthetic values;
- economic factors affecting the development of a destination;
- psychological factors.

Awareness about a site arises from the knowledge, dedication and care of a local community and all its members. In this way a connection between everyday life of the population and tourists' demands is established. If the planning and management of tourism development in rural areas can preserve, conserve, improve and contribute that the features are recognized as extremely significant ones, it means that they tend to preserve the quality of life in the area. This is directly related to the requirements of both the local population and tourists, which also contributes to the sustainability of tourism development in the area.

#### 5. POSITIONING RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION IN TOURISM MARKET

Tourism development and increased participation of foreign tourists in tourism travels at the global level have increased the number of tourist destinations. Therefore, the level and degree of competition in the global tourism market is extremely high. A tourist destination of rural tourism is facing the need to create specific promotional activities. This causes the creation of a specific image for each selected market considering its features in terms of tourism demand. Therefore, the positioning of a tourist destination must be very carefully and prudently accessed. Proper positioning of these destinations among the consumers, in fact means creating the image

<sup>1</sup> According to UNWTO data for 2011, foreign tourist movements recorded 980 million tourists and consumption of 1.030 billion US \$.

among the potential customers. The created image of rural tourism destination must be:

- different from the competitors;
- acceptable to the tourist market;
- satisfactory to tourism clientele;
- distinctive regarding the demand.

However, the positioning is not only to create an image of a destination. It is a way of communication between rural tourism destination and consumers in the desire to impact their decision on where to travel. The objective of this impact on consumers is that they select this tourist destination for their travel. This is a complex process that requires careful analysis of all destination attributes and characteristics of the target market. The selection of positioning strategy that will create a positive image and the desire for tourists to stay in some rural area are the prerequisites for the proper strategy towards access to the particular market.

Under the circumstances if all relevant facts are not taken into account it may happen that negative instead of positive effects are provoked among potential customers. This can happen when:

- a rural tourism destination enters the market where tourist destinations, whose products the market is familiar with, are already present. This also leads to the unfair competition that a new destination cannot withstand ...
- the promotion of rural tourism destination, due to inadequate approach, neither arose any emotion, nor it is recognized in the market ...
- a rural destination does not have any identity in the market ...
- a rural destination has already created a negative image among consumers ...

In such cases promotion and advertising cannot be successful regardless of the investments. This is exactly why the selection strategy for the positioning of tourism destination product is extremely important. According to the basic principles of marketing, providing products and services is aimed at "solving" the customers' problems, namely meeting the customers' needs and desires.

The proper positioning of a destination product has an impact on its entirety including: promotion, advertising, approach policy, behaviour of employees, consumers, consumer protection etc. No matter if it deals with positioning a country, region, rural areas or town as a tourism destination, the message must be clearly directed towards the market and its segments. Whether it leads to positive effects we will find out from a feedback through:

- a clear picture of customers' decision and their orientation towards the selected tourism destination;
- the satisfaction of tourism consumers who have stayed at that destination.

Developing a market approach strategy and positioning a rural tourism destination in a certain

market must pass through certain stages of the positioning process.

*Market positioning* is the first stage in which we must distinguish segments and determine criteria by which we will specify the needs and desires of the demand that a destination can satisfy.

We will observe the Japanese market and the needs of tourists from this country to indicate the method of selecting demand criteria as regards the destination. When travelling, these tourists especially want to:

- go sightseeing;
- buy characteristic products (souvenirs);
- visit restaurants (with or without program);
- use the services of tourist guides who speak Japanese;
- visit famous places;
- visit museums and galleries;
- visit theme parks ...

These tourists usually do not have a predetermined site that they want to visit but they select one destination that allows them to meet all these needs. Therefore, their selection depends on the offer, which must meet the following criteria:

- that this already is a popular tourism destination;
- that prices are moderate;
- that the programme consists of visiting as many sites as possible with sightseeing included as much as possible;
- require a high standard of services (not different from their country);
- require a varied choice and quality food;
- do not have great desire to interfere with local people;
- first of all want the security of their stay...

If we cross the data concerning the features that a tourist destination must have with the activities of Japanese tourists, we obtain information on the needs and requirements for a particular type and category of the tourist destination required by this segment of tourist demand.

*The psychological positioning* of rural tourism destination makes the evaluation of a tourism destination identity in the market and tourists' desires. Two types of psychological positioning tourism destination appear in the market: objective and subjective. Objective positioning is based on physical and functional characteristics of a destination. For this type of positioning unique values and features of the destination are used. Subjective positioning uses perception and already created image as its basis, without re-checking by tourists (accepting it "for granted").

*Positioning price competitiveness of a rural tourism destination* is extremely important taking into consideration strong competition from similar or better destinations. Therefore, a special attention must be paid

to the pricing issues that relate to selling a rural tourism product. The fact that the global tourism market requires exceptional quality assumes that prices must be competitive.

*Positioning related to customers* is a new approach in the placement of a rural tourism product. When observing the tourist offer of Serbian villages, we must recognize that this offer is primarily intended for the domestic tourism market. The positioning is also carried out accordingly.

The offered tourism product is subject to special analyses, which also introduce us into a special world of destination selection.

Identifying problems and their prevention are essential for good quality planning development and placement of a tourist destination. Some of the problems that usually occur in rural tourism destinations are:

1). *The basic issue is to recognize true attributes of rural destination development.* In the desire to reach or even surpass the development of "déjà vu" we forget certain basic features of a destination area. Thus, this leads to:

- inadequate construction in a tourism destination ...
- disruption of the life balance and destination development
- changes in the geographic image of a destination ...
- destruction of ecological environment of a destination ...

2). *The issue of building tourist facilities has far reaching consequences if it is:*

- the construction of inadequate accommodation facilities,
- the construction of a large number of accommodation facilities,
- the destruction of landscape for the sake of greater income which often is not greater (on the contrary);

3). *The issue of the analysis of tourism consumers and the offered tourism products.*

4). *The issue of tour operators' and travel agencies' adaptation for their appearance on certain tourism markets aimed at promoting and selling a tourism destination.*

Any approach to the positioning of rural tourism destinations is aimed at finding the market and the appropriate segment of demand for their products and services.

This is an important prerequisite in designing a development strategy and selling a tourism destination on the particular markets, after the complete analysis of a tourism destination, the analysis of consumers, consumer behaviour, the ways of making decisions on travelling, their motivation...

## 6. THE APPROACH FOR RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION APPEARANCE

In recent years many destinations have been facing the declining tourism turnover. At the same time these destinations have been recording an increase of "online bookings". What is happening? In fact the following questions are addressed to the creators of the development strategy and tourism destination placement:

- to compete classically or virtually?
- web strategy or not?
- how to attract customers?

We must agree that the tourism market in cyberspace is the inevitability which brings a large number of tourists in the tourist destination and makes revenues without which the destination could not survive. Therefore, the question is no longer whether to use cyberspace or not, but how to do it. How to make a desirable tourism destination? In order to have the proper destination web strategy we must:

- provide all the information available online to tourists;
- identify the most attractive resources;
- identify actual and potential tourist demand;
- identify attractive local events;
- identify demand in cyberspace;
- prepare a destination browser...

Destination Web strategy allows continuous input, innovation and improvements that positively affect the use of these sites for a tourist destination presentation and its placement.

By presenting only a small number of requests and issues facing a tourism destination aimed at its development and placement, we just raised a very important topic for further tourism development. However, as always, there are different opinions on the paramount significance of some issues compared to the others. One thing is certain in the rural tourism destination development – the problems, and everything else can be discussed.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Profound understanding of the importance and role of tourism as a means of rural community development and heritage conservation at the same time supports re-placement of tourism in the context of socio-cultural phenomenon as an economic activity. As the basic values and the driving motives that direct tourists to a village, we distinguish preserved nature, natural and cultural resources, customs, gastronomy, peace, and a number of specific activities that tourists may be engaged during their stay in the village. In addition to its residential character, the reasons for tourist movements to the village may be recreation,

excursion, or a particular event, but what opts them are precisely the mentioned values of rural areas.

The development of modern tourism has passed various stages. It can be said, that people create needs not only considering the life changes and meeting other cultural goods, but also the need for isolation in order to achieve better health, psycho-physical state, stability. Despite the spread of urban culture in rural areas, some customs survive as an integral part of village community identity. They should be preserved and presented to tourists through various performances and events.

Thus, in the minds of rural population the importance of their own cultural pattern will increase, and a need for reaffirmation of the repressed and forgotten customs may arise. Abundant experience in the preparation of traditional culinary specialties makes rural cuisine attractive to tourism demand. Exactly this particular segment of the village tourism offer is ranked immediately after the natural beauties and hospitality by its attractiveness and importance for tourists.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] **Dudley, N. (ed.)** (2008), *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- [2] **Hall, C. M., Page, S. J.** (2002), *The Geography of tourism and recreation – Environment, Place and Space*, Routledge, London.
- [3] **Hall, D., Kirkpatrick, I., Morag, M.** (2005), *Rural Tourism and Sustainable Business*, Channel View Publications, Clevedon.
- [4] **Hall, D., Kirkpatrick, I., Morag, M.** (2005), *Rural Tourism and Sustainable Business*, Channel View Publications, Clevedon.
- [5] **Middleton, V. T. C.** (2002), *Marketing in Travel and Tourism*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.
- [6] **Štetić, S., Šimičević, D.** (2011), *Značaj posebnih oblika turizma u ruralnom razvoju*, VI međunarodni naučni skup Turizam i ruralni razvoj-savremene tendencije, problemi i mogućnosti razvoja, Trebinje.
- [7] **Štetić, S.** (2007), *Posebni oblici turizma*, LI, Belgrade.
- [8] **Štetić, S., Šimičević, D., Nicić, M.** (2009), *Menadžment turističke destinacije*, Srpsko geografsko društvo, Belgrade.
- [9] **Štetić, S., Šimičević, D., Stanić, S.** (2011), *The role of sustainable development in the management of rural tourism destinations*, VI Međunarodni naučni skup Žagubica 2011.
- [10] **Štetić, S., Stanić, S., Šimičević, D.** (2011), *The placement potentials in rural areas and biodiversity in Serbia*, VI Međunarodni naučni skup Žagubica 2011.
- [11] **Todorović, M., Štetić, S.** (2009), *Ruralni turizam*, Geografski fakultet, Beograd.
- [12] **Trauer, B.** (2006), *Conceptualizing special interest tourism – frameworks for analysis*, Tourism Management 27.