

## RURAL TOURISM AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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### Abstract

Industrialized and developing countries increasingly develop rural tourism. It is particularly attractive for the population of highly urban areas and also because of the growing differentiation of lifestyles. Values that attract tourists in rural areas are: clean air, land, water, fresh food offer, peace and tranquility, cultural and historical heritage (monuments, folklore, country music) as well as other natural heritage (rivers, lakes, mountains).

Good examples of rural tourism are existing traditional ethno-villages, as well as newly developed ones. Existing tourist organizations offer visits to villages with daily or weekend arrangements, and full boarding arrangements. The share of foreign tourists in the total share of tourists in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is about 56%, and in the number of overnight stays is 52% and it differs by entities. According to the research, the total number of foreign tourists in BiH is about 1.4 million per year. There are typical products in Bosnia and Herzegovina that represent a basis for the development of tourism. Those are authentic sorts of fruit and vegetables, authentic breeds of cattle and poultry, as well as products received from them. Rural tourism can also be based on tourists' direct involvement in the countryside food production process, providing a concept of active vacation.

**Keywords:** Rural tourism, Forms, Authentic products, Development effects

### Introduction

Efforts to preserve natural environment, tradition and customs, to show and share them with a number people, leads to more intensive development of rural tourism, that is, activating rural areas for tourism purposes.

According to Hunziker and Krapf (2008), "*Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, insofar as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected with any earning activity.*" It is every journey that does not aim to perform an economic activity. A tourist is a person who travels at least 24 h.

Rural tourism is a trend both in Europe and world. It represents a form that includes a complexity of all activities and aspects of an integrated tourist product such as recreation in the countryside, enjoying environment and peace of rural areas, enjoying nature, national parks as well as nature parks, cultural tourism, tourism on rural households.

Rural tourism takes place in a rural area, outside the city. Residents of large cities are increasingly seeking rest and relaxation in some of the rural areas far from the city and the city noise.

Many villages provide an opportunity for development of rural tourism, within existing as well as those partly or completely abandoned. The concept of village could be defined as an area where the majority of population makes a living by a primary agricultural production and mostly breeding animals and growing plants. Natural heritage such as arable land, forests,

rivers, lakes and climatic conditions are usually the main factor that influences the development of a country.

Some definitions of rural tourism are related simply to tourism in the areas of low population density. Rural tourist destinations can be defined as areas that tourists visit in which the primary motive is enjoying the country atmosphere with variety of activities.

In the Strategy for the development of rural tourism in Southern Europe it is said that in the villages is being developed a special type of tourism which in English is called “*rural tourism*”. In practice a non-urban area could be called a “rural area”, which gives name for this type of tourism (Cetinski *et al.* 1995). Development of rural tourism is a necessity for ensuring the existence of rural areas. It is necessary to use all the comparative advantages that rural areas have. Also the development of rural tourism recently had a very significant and important tourism product in the domestic and international tourism market.

Rural tourism has a key role in the development and growth of economy, it also enables employment increase especially in rural areas, which includes young population and women. It also enables population migrations from urban areas to uninhabited and deserted places, especially of unemployed people in those places (OECD 2010). In general, the main functions of tourism are:

- contributes to employment increase of a large number of the population (directly or indirectly, through development of SME, engaged in treatment and processing of agricultural products, gathering forest fruit, herbs, healthy food production, development of craft, homecraft, and rural tourism),
- contributes to increasing and creating income,
- major source of foreign exchange income,
- contributes to increased revenues from taxes, fees, sales tax, tourist tax etc.

Attractiveness of rural tourism is assessed by the availability of healthy food, unpolluted air and water, healthy climate and the environment, peace and tranquility, preserved nature, preserved social and cultural heritage, restaurants, good infrastructure, picturesque region and others.

The greatest benefit from the development of rural tourism would have farms and the local economy.

According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), the concept of rural tourism is based on rich natural resources, rural heritage, rural lifestyle and rural activities. Natural resources include mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, and rural heritage includes traditional architecture, industrial heritage, history, castles, churches, villages. Rural life is related to entrepreneurship, local events, gastronomy, traditional music, rural activities related to horse riding, cycling, fishing, hiking and sports.

Production and distribution of food has importance in all forms of offer in rural tourism whether it is about participation of tourists in the harvest, sowing, harvesting fruit, accomodation on farms, gathering forest fruit, working on farms, horse riding, tasting products such as jam, honey and other products and beverages, milking cattle or visiting only for the consumption and supply of food and beverages. Also, food is a part of the offer of rural tourism within teaching of making products such as cheese, jam, wine and so on.

Besides, in the food offer it is also included shopping on farms or shops with farm products, buying local or regional products or handcrafted gifts.

### **Rural tourism as a specific type of tourist offer**

Rural tourism, agritourism, village tourism are often identified and imply the same term. A wide range of activities from rural supply can be successfully offered to tourists within rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are different definitions of rural tourism in different parts of the world but it always includes:

- a stay on the farm,
- buying products directly from the farm,
- picking fruit, feeding animals, on a farm.

Rural tourism include all the activities that bring visitors to farm or ranch that are mostly within village rural area. Tourist offer in the rural area could be expressed through other forms of tourism such as:

- agritourism,
- recreation and relaxation in nature,
- ecotourism,
- rural experience,
- cultural tourism: related to culture, archeology and other cultural content,
- other combined forms of tourism: tourist travels to rural areas and so on, as well as all services that complement accomodation – various events, festivals, outdoor recreation, production and sales of local souvenirs and agricultural products and so on.

The potential of B&H in different types of rural tourism is briefly described hereafter:

- Ecotourism includes types of tourism that support protection of natural resources, as well as maintenance of well-being and social value of local population (Anderson 1997). Ecotourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose potentials are natural beauty, forests, rivers and lakes, represent also a quality base for the development of a unique tourist product on one area.

- Mountain tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the country boasts beautiful mountains, some of which are already known ski resorts (such as olympic mountains of Bjelasnica, Jahorina, Vlasic, Igman, Trebevic). Excellent terrain, plenty of snow, suitable climate, slopes for all disciplines and gentle slopes, make mountains very attractive tourist destinations (interesting centers of mountain tourism open throughout the year and not only during winter season – Vlasic).

- Spa tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: there are several spas with various treatment potentials, that should be complemented with recreational components through investing in modernization of spas, introducing wellness and fitness programs (Ilidza spa near Sarajevo, Kiseljak, Tuzla, Fojnica, Srebrenica, Olovo, Teslic. This potential is favored by the abundance of springs of thermal-mineral water and radioactive water.

- Religious tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: churches, monasteries and mosques dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and other places of worship of other confessions represent diverse and great cultural and historical richness that is only at the beginning of tourist valorization (brochures of Orthodox monasteries, places of worship on tourist auto maps, presentations on fairs and websites of tourist organizations, programs of visits to places of worship). Tourist organizations work on valorization and promotion of religious tourism. Among better known are Prusac, Jajce with numerous built capacities, cultural monuments of three cultures-religions (Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism).

- Marine tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Neum Bosnian and Herzegovinian exit to the Adriatic Sea (Mostar, Ston Bay, Hutovo blato).

- Adventure tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is related to the rivers of Drina, Tara, Una, Vrbas with great potentials (World Rafting Championship held every year which is well

valorized in terms of tourism). There are also paragliding, mountaineering, cycling, as well as the possibility of development of increasingly popular canyoning.

- Hunting and fishing tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is oriented towards the domestic tourists. Most of the formerly well-attended hunting grounds attracted western clientele. By improvement of the infrastructure these areas will again become interesting to western tourists-hunters.

Rural experience is part of rural tourism where tourists live everyday rural life, and rural areas benefit through economic and other profits of tourist activities.

Any natural attraction is a potential tourist attraction that contributes to the development of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As a main motive for directing tourists towards rural areas could be considered a desire to stay in a preserved natural environment and sense of freedom, authenticity and tradition, which together result in a feeling of relaxation and calmness.

It is important to point out that tourism is based on hospitality. Hospitality is a relation between guest and host or a practice of hosts being hospitable. In particular, it includes reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or foreigners, but also respect for some codes and conventions. Hospitality also includes providing guests with desired attractions, special events, as well as other services for tourists. Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina need education in the area of hospitality and raising awareness level about the importance of hospitality in all forms of tourism and particularly in rural tourism.

### **Food offer and perspectives of rural tourism in bosnia and herzegovina**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has great potentials for rural tourism development. The largest potentials are natural and cultural-historical heritage as well as habits and life of local population.

There are people who do not like or can't imagine living outside the city, but there is also a population that can't imagine living in urban areas. For them rural areas provide much larger benefits and enjoyment (peace and well-being), and therefore they gladly decide to spend life in the countryside.

In the present conditions, migration from village to town is decreasing, and it will continue to grow in the future. Namely, in rural areas there are various unresolved social and economical problems (reduced agricultural activity, high competition among local farmers in the same community).

Development of rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on rich natural heritage, unpolluted rivers, high, medium and low mountains, variety of flora and fauna, mild climate – a motivating factor for attracting foreign tourists and cultural and historical heritage, various forms of plant and animal communities, specific ecosystems, thermal, thermal-mineral and mineral waters, vicinity of the Adriatic Sea.

In the future ecological and biodynamical farms should be developed, which would be the foundation of sustainable development of ecological tourism, purchasing and reconstruction of old and abandoned farm-houses for enjoyment and disposition of both domestic and foreign tourists.

Population in Bosnia and Herzegovina lives predominantly in rural areas (60 to 70%), where also the poverty is most common. The most important activity is agriculture, secondary and poorly present industry, trade and crafts. Rural tourism has potential for decreasing poverty and improving quality of life in rural areas.

Data from the statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina show that in 2011 74,585 tourists visited BiH, 1.5% more than in 2010. Number of overnight stays was very small (156,131, 0.2%). Development in tourism experienced growth but much slower than expected. Tourist

overnight stays of domestic tourists was 46.2%, and 53.8% of foreign tourists. Most overnight stays were realized by tourists from the region (Croatia: 13.6%, Serbia: 12.8%, Slovenia: 6.9%) rather than by tourists from other countries.

World Tourist Organization predicts that international tourism will continue to grow with an annual rate of 4% by 2020. Europe will be the most popular tourist destination, number of travels will grow in long-term period until 2020. According to data in Europe 23% of tourists annually choose rural tourism (Roberts and Hall 2001) and there is an estimated number of 200,000 registered service providers and more than 2,000 000 beds, with direct annual consumption of about 12 billion euro.

### **Natural resources and historical cultural heritage as a basis of the development of rural tourism**

B&H has huge natural potentials especially in villages in central Bosnia and in Herzegovina but the big problem is that there are not enough accomodation capacities. The lack of accomodation capacities, offer of domestic products and ignorance of local population of tourism prevent foreign tourists to visit more our villages.

Tourism in national parks and other protected areas and areas of perserved nature are potential tourist destinations and products in which BiH has exceptional conditions for a complex development of tourism (for example the National Park Sutjeska which is according to UNESCO one of the richest ecosystems and most beautiful parks of Europe). Among other parks there are the national park of Vranica, nature parks of Vlasic, Pogorelica-Bitovnja, and regional parks as Fojnika rijeka, Pliva, Gornji Vrbas (SBK2008).

International tourist demand is directed towards ecological-touristic destinations. It includes mountain tourism in a healthy and clean ecological environment. Among the protected objects of natural heritage stand out: waterfalls on Pliva in Jajce, waterfalls on Jaglenica river, Novi Travnik, Prokosko lake, Vranica in Fojnica, Gorge of Vrbas above Jajce, Tijesno gorge, gorge between Krupa on Vrbas, Stara Tisa in Travnik. Geographical location, natural resources, economic resources, tradition, experience have a great importance for BiH, especially from the economic point of view, representing an area with great opportunity for investments worth investing and doing business on, and seen as a field for good and mutual profit.

BiH has a variety of rural touristic offers. Also every rural household can develop special forms of tourist offer: accomodation of guests on their properties, offer of their own domestic products from the homecraft, tasting of domestic products (brandy, wine), organizing trips in the surroundings.

### **Food production within the development of rural tourism**

Food production is of strategic interest for BiH, which with a significant share in the structure of GDP (about 15%) increasingly enables development of rural areas and food security of the population. With rural tourism is connected the offer of organic food. People who come to the country want to feel the atmosphere, want to eat healthy food. To such places come middle-aged tourists who spend a lot. Rural tourism includes something authentic, a branded product, which BiH still doesn't have.

Typical products are the most important potential in the offer of rural tourism in BiH, particularly agricultural and food products, where a combination of natural factors and specific production methods guarantee the expected quality.

Significant authentic dairy products in BiH are sour milk, whey, buttermilk, cheeses (white cheese, zarica dry cheese, cheese from the bucket, Travnik/Vlasic cheese, cheese from milk), and flour products such as lepina, flat bread, as well as religious types of bread. Significant authentic fruit products are prune, plum jam, apple jam, apple must, cabbage from Semberija, strawberries from Celic, potatoes from Glamoc.

Improvement of production of typical authentic food products is a basis for development of village and rural tourism, expansion of the offer of agricultural and food products, and in the same time a precondition for decreasing poverty and improvement of life quality in rural areas.

### Conclusions

The main objectives of development of rural tourism are attracting foreign and domestic tourists, the return of the young people to the countryside from urban areas, development of organic food production in the rural areas.

Significance of rural tourism is in the added value of products, improvement of sustainability of agriculture and life in the rural areas which enables creating alternative income sources in non-agricultural sector.

For rural population extra income from rural tourism can contribute to the revival of lost activities in production of typical food products, authentic dishes, folk arts and handicrafts.

The main task of the development policy of B&H should be attracting tourists as well as good positioning on the market with adequate tourist resources and smooth running of tourism policy towards creating long-term strategic potentials.

Well created marketing policy could contribute to rural tourism to become one of the significant drivers of development in all regions of B&H.

Population of B&H needs education in the area of tourist disciplines, particularly in raising awareness of the importance of hospitality in all forms of tourism as well as in rural tourism.

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