Sustainable Rural Tourism of Lower Danube Region in Serbia: Challenges and Realities

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism implies preserved space, prevents ecological and socio-cultural devastation, but at the same time encourages tourism development. Their application and adequate implementation increases the chance of a tourist destination that will be able to develop sustainable tourism, so the aim of this paper is to separate characteristics and principles of sustainability on certain areas and to show their advantages and limitations. In this paper are introspected factors of tourism development, both in a positive and in a negative context. It was hypothesized that sustainable rural tourism in the Lower Danube region has a comparative advantage, but it is also a major challenge for the community. Methodological setting is qualitative, based on the contextual dimension of the data, empirical observations, exploratory research and observations. Obtained results show that the tourist offer of sustainable rural tourism in the Lower Danube region has its own unique values, which should continue to explore.

Keywords: Lower Danube, Rural Area, Serbia, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Destination

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the planning and management of rural tourism is to achieve sustainable development of rural settlements, including the specifics of space, the preservation of authentic cultural values and environmental quality. In order to become a potential tourism product it is necessary that a rural tourism destination should possess an appropriate level of attractiveness. The large variety of natural and socio-cultural environment allows tourists a unique experience through the diversification of tourism products within the rural areas. Active contribution of tourism to sustainable development implies solidarity, mutual respect and participation of all stakeholders, both state and private. Tourism development on the principle of sustainability implies that it should be a long-term ecologically bearable, economically vital, ethically and socially equitable for local communities. Developing cultural and heritage attractions is not always the best way to approach product development (Gartner, 2005).

For the sustainable development of rural tourism, fair relationship is necessary between all stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in this activity. Tourism development affects the ecological, social and cultural and economic characteristics of rural areas, both in a positive and a negative context, which conditions singling out the characteristics and principles of sustainable tourism.

Rural tourism is a form of tourism in which the sustainability is inherent. There is a relatively small number of visitors in rural tourism, its development does not require huge infrastructure investments like other forms of tourism, the tourists are interested in local culture and tradition. The characteristics of sustainable tourism are:

1. slow development,
2. it takes into account the social and environmental factors,
3. controlled development on a smaller scale,
4. development managed by long-term interests,
5. local control of development,
6. stable development,
7. qualitatively oriented development,
8. focused on the values that can be obtained for the money,
9. continuous education and training of staff, including the local residents,
10. developed occupational structure in the tourism industry,
11. the education of tourists and the public about the importance and benefits of tourism,
12. the regional approach to tourism as a factor of integral development of larger spatial units, that is regions (Štetić, Šimičević & Ćurčić, 2013).

The development of rural tourism should be focused on expansion, differentiation and unification. In practice, integrated management contributes to the achievement of sustainable rural development (Štetić, Šimičević & Ćurčić, 2013). If development of a rural tourism destination is directed in this way, its long-term competitiveness could be
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