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ТЕОРИЯ И ПРАКТИКА ГАРМОНИЗАЦИИ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ  
ПРИРОДНЫХ, СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ И ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННЫХ СИСТЕМ РЕГИОНА

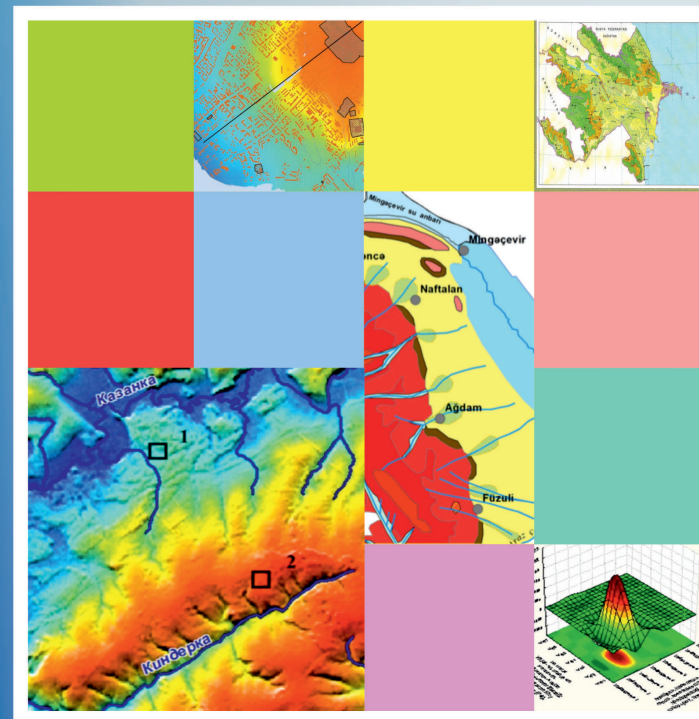
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## ТЕОРИЯ И ПРАКТИКА ГАРМОНИЗАЦИИ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ПРИРОДНЫХ, СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ И ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННЫХ СИСТЕМ РЕГИОНА

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МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ  
ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ БЮДЖЕТНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ  
УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ «НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ  
ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ МОРДОВСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
им. Н. П. ОГАРЁВА»

ГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ ИНСТИТУТ «ЙОВАН ЦВИИЧ»  
СЕРБСКОЙ АКАДЕМИИ НАУК И ИСКУССТВ  
ИНСТИТУТ ЭКОЛОГИИ ВОЛЖСКОГО БАССЕЙНА РАН  
ОТДЕЛЕНИЕ ВОО «РУССКОЕ ГЕОГРАФИЧЕСКОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО»  
В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ МОРДОВИЯ

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# **ТЕОРИЯ И ПРАКТИКА ГАРМОНИЗАЦИИ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ПРИРОДНЫХ, СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ И ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННЫХ СИСТЕМ РЕГИОНА**

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## MODEL OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION – THE EXAMPLE FROM SERBIAN RURAL SOCIETY

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**Abstract.** The article empathizes the studies of the effects of the international processes on economy growth, which is reflected in intensity and the direction of the tourist flows, as well as in the development of the special interests' tourism. In modern studies on the development of the international tourist trends, tourism activities in rural surroundings have raised as its very increasing segment. Competition in tourism development in the region is performed powerfully, although there is often cooperation on cluster-supporting basis. Due to the characteristics of the tourism cluster, local development programs consider it as a local strategy for combating regional disparities and social inequality. The model of tourism development of the rural parts of Serbia presented in this paper shows the agglomerate tourism development in the region, which segments are generally effectively dependent on each other. Nevertheless, unsatisfactory performance of one may compromise the success of the others. Together with these, results show supporting entities in tourism divided into four groups. These are the key propositions to start an initiative for the tourism to actively participates in the overall progress of countryside. The results provide residents, tourism organizers and local authorities with relevant ideas pertaining to the potential increasing development of the region.

**Keywords:** rural development, rural economy, developing model, tourism, Serbia.

### Introduction

Over the last few decades, tourism has been one of the activities with the highest potential for the global expansion. Since the 1980s, the quickening internationalization process and the opening of national economies have boosted tourism to becoming the second most global sector, second only to the financial sectors [Silveira, 2002]. According to da Cunha & da Cunha [Da Cunha et al., 2005], improved transport and communications systems that have reduced traveling time and costs, as well as the increasing number of business trips and social gains have accelerated the growth of tourism and the internationalization process. For the successful tourism, it is necessary to have not only attractive resources, capacities and high-quality products, but also an efficient organization, adequate training and well-designed marketing.

In the approach of planning the development of tourism in rural regions of Serbia, it is especially important to research the market and use all the instruments of marketing for adequate tourism development of the region. One of the important tasks in tourism development is the training of tourist service providers in doing such an activity. As Muhi [Muhi, 2013] claimed, it is necessary, through expert processing of domestic and foreign experiences in the involvement in tourism in rural areas, to point out to the hosts the economic justification of doing such an activity. Moreover, by practicing marketing activities, propaganda and market performance a goal can be set that the public, i. e. domestic and foreign visitors, learn about the opportunities which

tourism offers in Serbia. The development of tourism in the observed region necessarily should be done through cooperation, not only on the level of local communities, but also through national and international initiative. In order to achieve a significant promotion on the macro-level, tourism needs to apply an integrated marketing approach which would be accepted by the owners of the tourist facilities, but also by the local governments, tourist organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as private sector. The main goal of the tourism development in rural society in Serbia is the design of such a tourist offer that will provide the visitors with a wide range of various facilities in order to meet their wishes and needs. In order to achieve that, it is necessary that all the subjects who provide tourist services cooperate with each other, but also with the institutions, which direct that development on the macro-level. All the bearers of the tourist policy who coordinate the development of tourism on all the levels should be so organized that their activity completely reflects the present and the expected demands of domestic and foreign consumers in tourism [Bakić, 2010]. George and Rilla [George et al., 2011] stated that the owners of the accommodation units should expect great expenses (from 10 to 25 % of the means) directed to the needs of their business activities in the first four years. Later, that share of expenses begins to fall, except if the external impacts (most often the competition) do not affect a different market behavior. The tourism development of Serbia can be viewed from a few aspects: local, provincial and national. It exists not only on the level of a destination, but also for specific products, such as the accommodation in farm stays, facilities in a rural area, agricultural and food products of the local community etc. A good example was given by Clarke [Clarke, 2005]. He has claimed that in the UK, there is a consortium made of the members who provide accommodation services on farms, with members who provide services of food, drinks and beverages. The consortium has been founded in order to develop regional collaboration on the national level through the leading institutions (Government), on the local level through the municipal authorities, and on the individual level through the actions of the members of various (non) governmental associations.

### **An overview from tourism development in rural society in Serbia**

Tourism development in Serbia is facing specific challenges in the sense of creating and projecting efficient regional and business identity. One important reason is a relatively limited power of attraction, which country could achieve on the more and more competitive and global tourist market. The other one is that rural tourist economy stays very fragmented in its effort to comprise many relatively small, mainly family legal entities. The number of participants on the side of the tourist offer of tourism and their relatively insufficient power to take actions point to the importance of the application of marketing by state and social institutions, organizations and associations on all the levels.

It is especially important to emphasize the role of tourist organization on the national, provincial and local level (municipal and town) with the business aim to support the market appearance, i.e. forming, sales and presentation of products of all the segments of tourism (including tourism in rural areas) in Serbia. It is possible to achieve through the market research, creation of an image, support to the development of tourist products, as well as through staff training and advising activities [Demirović et al., 2016]. In solving the mentioned problems, the key point is the relationship between the public sector, travel companies, regardless the form of the ownership, and natural persons and legal entities who are directly involved in providing services in tourism. The answer should be found through the process of appropriate planning and the management of the tourism development, especially through the establishment of the system of long-lasting involvement of public-private partnership in the development of this aspect of tourism in Serbia.

Within the tourism development in Serbia, a special emphasis should be on the *people*, as one of the most important factors of marketing strategy in rural areas. The tourist offers, besides the rural environment, is undoubtedly connected with the exceptional characteristics of people who live and work in the countryside. They themselves could be «attractiveness», i. e. their eve-

ryday life, customs, results of their activities, dance, national costumes, rituals, cults, beliefs etc. Therefore, the space and the people together are the indivisible basis of the development of tourism, from the integration of which a tourist product is created [Petrović et al., 2016a; 2017]. Tourism comprises numerous participants: the hosts who offer accommodation, the hosts who also offer their products (natural and cultural) and the consumers of services in tourism. Without people, it would not be possible to design, offer or realize a service. So, an open question can be asked: «why are the people the most important factor of the development in tourism?»

The main factors which make tourism specific and interesting on the tourist market are: rural atmosphere, rural life, tradition, nostalgia, hospitality and warmth, variety and authenticity. Therefore, tourism of Serbia should not be based on the offer of modern buildings, the house environment arranged in a modern way, with technical and technological innovations and futuristic objects. In contrary, it should be based on the warmth of a rural, authentic atmosphere, variety of traditional, cultural heritage and the richness of natural resources of the rural environment of a facility. Tourism should primarily contain elements of the direct contact with the people in a rural area, with their customs, dance and all the other elements which are specific for such a micro-space. According to Guttentag [Guttentag, 2015], in the domain of the offer and realization it is important to bear in mind that the people who offer a tourist service are also participants themselves. They are both the facility of a stay and its sellers. Hosts, i.e. rural households, have a double role and as such, they should be stimulated for the work in tourism. The development of tourism in traditional and preserved spaces should be based on the active participation of the local community, not only in providing services, but primarily in the division of benefits and profits from the development of tourism. It means that the owners of rural facilities in Serbia who are interested in adjusting, training and getting equipped for the development of tourism, and later to feel the benefits of that development (social, economic etc.). Only when they really profit from it, hosts will wish and want to invest in the development of their estate, and so they will be ready to take the role of producers and service providers, but also of sellers and animators. The training for the work in tourism of Serbia should be directed to all the people who are involved in this aspect of tourism, and its segments would be: program planning, services providing, direct contact with visitors, as well as all the people and institutions which generally care or should care for the development of tourism in that area. The final goal of all these trainings (courses, conversations, workshops, etc.) should be that all the potential participants from local governments to rural hosts, realize the value which the development of tourism could have for their region, as well as find the benefits which tourism development could bring them. Everything mentioned has a goal in a conscious development of tourism, which must not be uncontrolled, unplanned or sporadic, but a planned, controlled and continuous process.

### **Regional competitiveness of tourism development**

For the higher regional competitiveness and representatives of tourism in Serbia, it is necessary that the service providers follow modern technical and technological trends or ask for help to learn about them. Such trends primarily relate to the information technologies, but also other marketing actions, which mean the following:

*Design of an efficient web site of the tourist offer* – an adequate and information-adapted site (at the moment) has proved to be the most important marketing means in tourism worldwide, much more efficient than any other printed material, so the tourist service providers are recommended to try to make their site as attractive and informative as possible.

*Stay in touch with the guests who have already stayed in the accommodation unit* – the most efficient way to do that is via e-mail, which represents an efficient means for sending current news and information, e.g. in a form of e-newspapers, thanks to which the guests are informed about new offers which service providers are offering.

*Making special selling offers* – it can be illustrated on a simple and common example – *after three paid overnight stays the guests get the forth one for free*; such a way of selling has



proved to be a very efficient means of promotional activities of accommodation units, as well as of other segments of selling in tourism in rural settings.

*Cooperation with the media on all the levels* – with the adequate «provocation», it is necessary to raise the interest of the media for the host's offer and to spread (positive) news about it via printed and electronic media, since this kind of advertising brings positive effects.

*Leave a good first impression* – guests need only a couple of minutes to get a good or a bad first impression and to “label” the accommodation unit as a pleasant or unpleasant place to stay at; it is necessary to remember the fact that *good news spreads fast, but the bad one even faster*, so, in this context, the first impression is usually of the crucial importance for the impressions of guests;

*Offer high-quality products* – the first thing that guests expect in accommodation units is a high-quality tourist product; besides the high quality of sanitary-hygienic conditions and the authenticity of the experience, the quality in this sense also comprises home-made food and characteristic articles, events, as well as the outstanding hospitality which is stereotypical for the people in rural areas;

*The necessity of the training of all the family members and the employees who are in contact with the guests* – the organization of doing courses and trainings by organizing seminars, workshops, meetings and other forms of business gatherings, but also by consulting the expert literature and the people who have formal education in this field of tourism will contribute the hosts to be more skilled and readier for the reception and serving the visitors in their tourist establishment;

*Cooperation with tourist organizations (on the local, provincial and national level) and professional associations which deal with tourism, handicrafts, agriculture etc.* This form of cooperation is mutually useful and that is why the household should connect more closely with legal entities (with tourist organizations, associations, clusters etc.). Those entities are in service of the National Government or they are self-initiatively in charge of rural and tourist development [adapted notes according to the suggestions of the consulting firm *Eckert AgriMarketing*, in George et al., 2011, p. 116].

Except the private initiative, it is also necessary to engage local communities and local tourist organizations in the regional tourism development. To achieve such a goal, it is necessary to publish specialized brochures, make films and multimedia presentations, organize study trips for reporters, etc. Together with these, for the tourist organizations representatives, and present the tourist offers of accommodation units and events on the fairs, stock exchange markets, and presentations abroad, where the main promoters should certainly be tourist organization on the national and provincial level. By doing so, one should always have in mind that tourism market differs from all the other markets in the fact that its offer is immobile by its nature and that the demand is mobile. Furthermore, on the market, the tourist expenses are realized almost continuously during a travel with a high intensity on the departure and arrival points of travel, i.e. in the places, which represent attractive phases of tourist travels and that it usually has a seasonal character. It is necessary to enable an equal promotion of tourism on the national level through tourist organizations, i. e. by involving rural area as a recognizable tourist product in the promotion of Serbia on the international market.

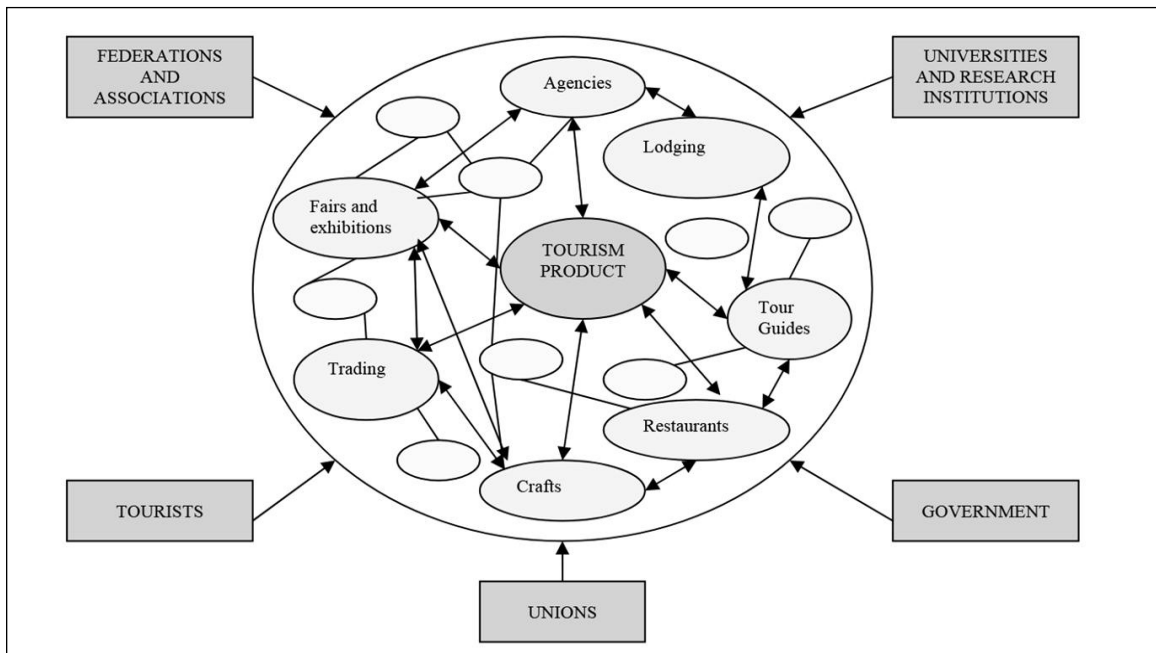


Fig. 1. The model of agglomerate tourism development in the region [adapted according to da Cunha et al., 2005]

Although collaboration is a cluster-supporting basis, competition in tourism development in the region is performed vigorously. Even when cooperation is the cluster's main element, rivalry is also necessary for its development and survival. Due to the characteristics of the tourism cluster, local development programs consider it as a local strategy for combating regional disparities and social inequality. Porter [Porter, 1999] emphasized that tourism does not depend only on the appeal of the main traditional attraction, but also on the comfort and service of all other stakeholders (e.g. hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, airports, etc.). As the example shows (fig. 1), the parts of the agglomerate tourism development in the region are generally effectively dependent on each other. A bad performance of one may compromise the success of the others.

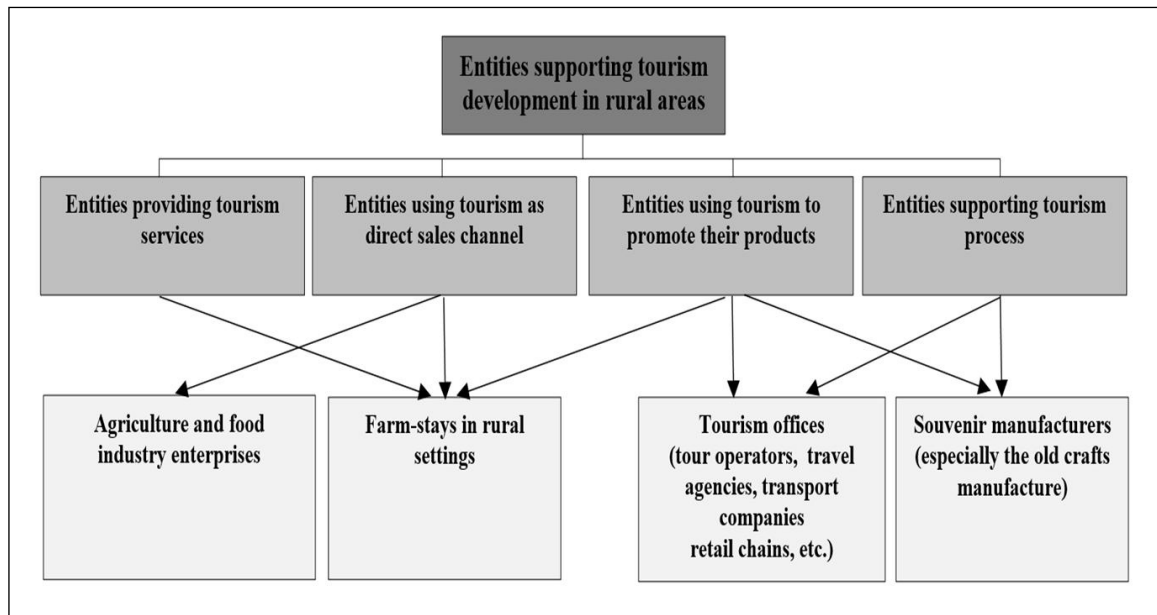


Fig. 2. Classification of the entities supporting tourism in rural areas [adapted according to Sznajder et al., 2009]

The concept of tourism developed in rural surroundings is designed in such a way that more segments of local economy could profit from the tourist activities present. In this respect, Figure 2 shows supporting entities in tourism divided into four groups. The first group comprises those



subjects that directly provide tourist products and services, such as farm-stays type of accommodation. The second group is made of subjects that use tourism for direct sale of their products, where, besides the mentioned, there are also companies from food industry (milling and bakery, dairy production, meat-processing etc.). The third group consists of persons who promote their products through tourism, which can relate to all the mentioned subjects. And finally, the fourth group contains subjects that support the processes in tourism and which do not make the basis of the offer of this aspect of tourism. The most common examples are souvenir shops, but they can also be travel agencies, traffic and sales companies etc.

### **Offer and demand in tourism of Serbian rural surroundings**

Regional development of rural tourism, as in other similar service fields, involves research and analysis of the consumers' needs as its main goal. It is estimated in such a way that the segmentation of their preferences is done based on numerous criteria, such as: *gender and age structure, average monthly salary, residence, specific demands and needs, lifestyle*, etc. The authors Ollenburg and Buckley [2011] stated that, alongside with these criteria, *the location of the facility* has a crucial role in choosing marketing means in tourist business.

The complexity of the tourist demand directed to the rural regions of Serbia is the reason why a tourist offer is complex in order to satisfy the demands of modern consumers in tourism. If we look at the process of designing the offer from the marketing point of view, it is a creation and affirmation of a tourist product. That process is also possible to realize from the viewpoint of the creator of the tourist product, as a union of various activities and functions, when we talk about a partial tourist product. If a tourist product is observed from the viewpoint of a visitor, it is an overall experience, gained through a tourist travel, which overcomes the union of its facilities (e.g. attractions, conditions for a stay and availability). Such a product is considered a united tourist product and it particularly emphasizes the interdependence between the participants in satisfying the needs, demands and wishes of visitors. Tourism represents a union of various components. Numerous theorists have presented the schemes that could be used for planning a tourist destination and some of them are:

- Scheme 1: *Accommodation, attractions – access to the place – activities and available services* [Gannon, 1995],
- Scheme 2: *Attractions – availability – amenities – available services – activities and additional services* [Buhalis, 2000] and
- Scheme 3: *Accommodation – attractions – places and services – accessibility – image – price* [Middleton et al., 2009].

Seaton and Bennet [Seaton et al., 1996] emphasized the importance that a destination has among visitors, where special attention should be paid to when developing and organizing a tourist destination. Clarke [Clarke, 2005] noted that marketing cannot replace planning, but that these two activities should work together, each discipline from its own angle. Moreover, destinations in a rural area can be observed from the consumer's point of view as a collection of attractions: *see, buy* and *be/do* attractions. Basically, this means that visitors should be allowed to see, do and buy products and services from their hosts and/or from the narrower and broader local area.

«*Seeing attractions*» concept is basically passive and it comprises a traditional sightseeing, but, as such, it can be an important segment of rural areas' offer. This approach in the western literature is better-known under the name of «*life-seeing*» and it is less and less present in the international tourist trends.

«*Buying attractions*» concept offers visitors a possibility to buy goods or services during their stay in the countryside, such as agricultural and food products (food and drinks), souvenirs, handicraft goods, doing courses in old crafts and skills, etc. Both categories are important for the integration of tourism in the local economy, for expressing local identity and in creating important networks: farmers' markets, agricultural shops, local crafts fairs, exhibitions of rural crafts, antique shops etc. The purchasing of these attractions needs a planned integration in the

rural product. It is necessary that that integration be sensitive, due to the nature of the tourist offer, but also due to the need of certain segments of visitors to discover and explore.

«*Being/Doing attractions*» concept is based on mastering certain skills and on special interests, this concept is intended for the visitors who want to spend their free time actively during their stay in the countryside. The attractions could be based on the local identity or they do not have to be connected with it at all, but they make profits to the facility and the local community. Such a concept can be equaled with the «*life-participating*» concept, which represents an attractive and modern way of visitors' spending time in accommodation units with an active doing of the majority of agricultural and other work (orienteering competition, water sports, art courses, sport tournaments etc.). These simultaneously contributes to the local development using only rural environment and providing a higher quality of the offer.

Of these three kinds of attractions, the third category is certainly the leading one in the development of a tourist product. However, according to Clarke [Clarke, 2005], every rural destination should be a mixture of these three concepts. This leads to a conclusion about the equal development of all the concepts in order to achieve an integrated development of tourism of Serbia.

### **Cooperation in tourism on the international level – the examples of successful rural development**

The cooperation on the international level is of an extreme importance for learning about the current trends in rural aspects of tourism in the world, adoption of successful world models of development with the respect for all the specific features and the affirmation of natural, cultural and other resources. The importance of the cooperation on the international level is even greater as the interest of consumers in agritourism moves from the economically developed countries towards new destinations and is even more connected with special interests. On the global tourist market, a great number of international associations are active and their scope of activities is related to development of rural aspects of tourism, and among the most outstanding ones are *EuroGites*, *ECEAT* and *IAERT*.

*European Federation of Rural Tourism*, better known under the acronym *EuroGites*, has its headquarters in Almeria (Spain). Their slogan “*Country Holidays in Europe*” attracts more and more European countries to join this federation with the aim of networking and improvement of services in rural tourism of the country members. In 2016, the Federation had 35 professional organizations from 27 European countries (including Serbia), which offered a choice of about 100 000 places for the accommodation in rural areas [EuroGites Federation, 2017]. The established quality standards of this Federation represent the result of the agreement achieved during the General Assembly of the Federation in 2005, and which was supported by all the members at that time [Petrović et al., 2015; 2016b]. The offer mainly contains the services such as bed and breakfast (BB) or just the rent of accommodation units (NA), depending on the type of accommodation. Thanks to the united offer on the level of the continent, today, *EuroGites* is an important nucleus and the base of the rural resources offer in the country members, which have their own direct links, which lead potential consumers in tourism to the websites of their national rural-tourist offers [EuroGites Federation, 2017].

*European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism – ECEAT* is independent and unprofitable association that gathers national *ECEAT* organizations in European countries. It was formed in 1992 with the headquarters in Garsnas (Sweden). The center was founded by organizations dedicated to the development of rural, eco or sustainable tourism in Sweden, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Germany and Portugal. The main aim of the Center is the improvement of tourism which helps the development of organic agriculture, sustainable soil usage, the environment protection, village development and cultural heritage protection, and it is especially dedicated to the support of the organization of programs for holiday in villages. Most of the programs are realized in the areas which are ideal for hiking, cycling, horse riding, bird watching, water sports. Moreover, they also organize drawing and painting schools, learning foreign languages,

music courses, learning traditional crafts, medical curing. The center has four main ways of work: working of the whole territory of the country, organizing education for farmers who want to work in tourism, for the consumers and public, the application of sustainable quality criteria when including an accommodation place into travel programs and direct work for the benefits of consumers (more precisely, making advertising material, primarily catalogues and guide books, taking and processing accommodation bookings and preparation of the programs for travel organizers). Based on that, the Center wants to create a unique certification system in European frames, primarily for the services in agritourism, as well as an appropriate booking system. For all kinds of accommodation capacities, they have developed: a) standards which deal with comfort, b) standards in accordance with the environment, c) standards for the sustainable soil usage and d) socio-cultural standards. The programs of professional training are realized through individual visits, seminars, workshops or through the application of guidelines for entrepreneurs in agritourism. The Center issues a unified list of service quality standards which contains: standards for the accommodation places which are used as a basis for the common minimum of services system in the accommodation places, which guarantees guests a certain level of service qualities and the basic criteria of services. Every member guarantees the application of minimal services quality standard which the Center has issued [European Centre..., 2017].

*International Association of Experts in Rural Tourism and Agritourism – IAERT* based in Perugia (Italy), was founded in 1998. The association has the aim to promote culture, development and business in agritourism within the strategy of integral and sustainable rural development. The association members come from 27 countries from all over the world and they can be natural persons or legal entities from this field. Among the activities of this association, especially important are promotional activities with the topic: sustainable and integrated rural development and cultural exchange; sustainable development of rural aspects of tourism; improvement of life quality in local communities; researches and projects in the field of rural development etc. The association is the organizer of the *International school for rural and agritourism* and the *World forum of rural tourism* [International Association..., 2017].

Since there is a prevailing opinion that tourism is considered to be an important segment of rural development, it can be concluded that this collective aspect of tourism is one of the priorities in the future development of the national rural economy. As high priorities in rural tourism the outstanding ones are: activities in the nature (fishing, cycling, horse riding etc.), and activities connected with culture and gastronomic tours. The country is especially dedicated to the valorization of the waters on its territory, but also to the rapid development of rural tourism and catering, based on the autochthonous culinary specialties of the ethnic groups that inhabited this area.

## **Conclusion**

The main characteristics of the tourism development in the region through the example from Serbian rural society and its offer and the demand, point to the importance of the application of proper model in order to create a foundation for a rational and successful market business. There are numerous differences in rural aspects of tourism in general, not only in the elements of tourist products. Those differences are represented as a share of tourism in the local economy, as the power of attracting visitors (local, regional, national and international levels) and as a phase of a product life cycle. The needs and problems which adequate model of the tourism development in the region should solve are very different depending on the phase of the life cycle of a tourist product. Through the developed tourist destinations of rural aspects of tourism with numerous weekend cottages, the recognizable quality of attractions, it is necessary to pay attention to the complete aspects and the refreshment of products. These mean special actions in certain segments, so that they could penetrate the tourist market more efficiently and raise the interest of a larger number of tourists to visit them.

Except the personal feeling of the individual service providers, the understanding of tourist market in Serbia is generally quite weak. It is rooted in the weak regional development research-

es and insufficient access to data, traditional statistics of the visits to a place such as the number of visitors, a stay duration, and consumption are insufficiently reported. In addition, the methodology of local statistics can be doubtfully created, and the calculation of the share of the market and adequate comparisons are almost impossible. The understanding of the market also demands the full understanding of the visitors' motivation, their needs and wishes, their perceptions and their behavior in shopping, in consumption and after the consumption of services. That is exactly where the focus of further researches and development in the field such as tourism should be.

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