



THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT OF THE FEMALE WORKFORCE IN THE RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF SERBIA¹

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ABSTRACT

The participation of women in the rural tourism development of Serbia is not at a satisfactory level because it marks the predominant satisfaction of basic existential needs, with a high representation of material deprivation. The participation of women in the social community is very superficial, a pronounced passive cultural pattern, and the lifestyle of women in the countryside is mainly focused on reproduction. The authors of the paper aimed to, with the help of a survey interview in the field, establish the degree of participation of women, as well as their position in tourism development in Serbia. The research was conducted in the municipality of Šid, during a traditional event dedicated to women in the countryside. The obtained results, processed in the SPSS software, version 23.00, undoubtedly prove the poor position of women and their insufficient contribution to the development of tourism. The importance of the work emphasizes the issue of women's position in rural areas and activities, based on the results obtained, it is possible to contribute to corrective measures and strengthening the female workforce in this economic sector.

1. Introduction

Serbia has a large number of villages with natural and cultural values, but unfortunately insufficiently valorized areas and poorly represented on the tourist market. The diversity of tourist resources and the richness of the cultural heritage are enriched by the hospitality and cordiality of the rural population. The issue of rural development and the well-being of the rural population is one of the main issues of the overall sustainable development of Serbia. Rural areas still represent a significant part of the territory of Serbia -85%, and a significant part of the population of Serbia still lives in them -42%. However, rural areas face a number of serious problems such as strong depopulation, economic underdevelopment, rising poverty and generally unfavorable living conditions. The development of rural tourism in Serbia dates back to the 1970s (Cvijanović et al., 2020). However, the conditions for more massive development of rural tourism have never been met, both in terms of structure and quality, and in terms of traffic volume and consumption. Many authors have dealt with the definition of rural tourism, but the field is still open for all those who want to study the theory of tourism

in finding new elements relevant to the phenomenon as a whole. Rural tourism is a specific partial market because the supply-demand relations in that market are specific.

The complexity of rural tourism with all its specifics affects the constant need to take new actions to adapt the rural tourism product to the demands of tourism demand by recognizing the needs of tourists in creating a rural tourism product, its realization and appearance on the tourism market. Rural tourism has been recognized as a major catalyst for socio-economic regeneration in rural areas (Risman, 1998). Rural tourism encompasses various activities and interests on farms, nature, adventure, sport, health, education, art, tradition and culture, folklore, belief values and common heritage. There is a growing demand for rural tourism products in the world and Europe, and it is considered to be a useful way of addressing the social and economic challenges at the time of the decline of the traditional agrarian industry (Gajić et al., 2018).

Gender theory as a social structure must clarify certain phenomena in organizations with attention to gender implications. Gender is deeply embedded as

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a basis for stratification not only in our personalities, our cultural rules or institutions, but in all of these, and in complicated ways. Nowadays, it is very difficult for women in the countryside to achieve and harmonize their work and family functions, because they do not have enough support from institutions. Women engaged in rural tourism, mostly live in the countryside and are engaged in agriculture. Women have limited opportunities for employment, education and economic independence, do not own property, and find it very difficult to start their own private business. In some parts of Serbia, there is progress in this regard, in the sense that women from rural areas are recognized in the competitions of relevant institutions (Tom, 2015). The main goal of the research was to determine the participation of women in the provision of services in rural tourism in Serbia. The importance of the research is reflected in pointing out the problematic parts of rural business and obstacles to the participation of women in the labor force and their poor position in this business sector, as well as in identifying corrective measures (Gajić et al., 2018). The sample may not be representative at the state level, but it can certainly contribute to the perception of the situation, and with additional research contributes to changing the global situation in the female labor market in rural tourism.

2. Literature Review

The contribution of rural tourism to the economic development of an area is reflected in its impact on investment, income or employment, causing their increase, and thus, as a rule, an increase in the standard of living of the individual and the community in which it takes place. Rural areas are also characterized by a significant lag in development behind urban areas (Blagojević, 2002; 2009). This is indicated by the fact that the social product per capita in these areas is 1/4 lower than the national average. Depopulation of rural areas leads to an aging rural population. The aging index is significantly higher in the rural than in the urban population and amounts to 124.7% versus 97.4% (Fisher, 2011). In addition, the general trend of depopulation of villages takes on a gender character (participation of women in the total population of Serbia 51.4%, in urban settlements 52.3%, and settlements classified as 'other' 50%) (Cvijanović et al., 2020). Rural tourism is an insufficiently valorised resource in Serbia,

although it is becoming a daily necessity of the people, as well as a segment that can significantly contribute to the development of the economic sector in the future of the country (Yang et al., 2016). Regarding rural tourism in Serbia, it can be said that by the end of the 20th century, its development was rather out of sync with other sectors, and uncoordinated, with a very undifferentiated supply (Munoz, 2009). On average, 408,580 overnight stays take place within rural tourism in Serbia, which is about 6.2% of the total number of overnight stays in Serbia (Gajić et al., 2018). The strong upward trend achieved by rural tourism creates a driving force for overall economic growth, employment growth and social development, and as a result of prominent positive externalities to the economy, there is an increasing number of research papers that bring us closer to understanding rural tourism and its effects (Pantić et al., 2019).

There are 6,158 settlements on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, of which 193 are urban (3.1%), and 5,965 are other settlements, which are automatically considered rural. About 1,000 households are registered in Serbia in rural settlements that provide catering and tourist services. Members of about 300 households are engaged in tourism as their main activity. There are about 8,000 beds in the total offer. The economic structure of Serbia's rural areas is highly dependent on the primary sector and is still based on the depletion of natural resources. Rural areas in Serbia are dominated by traditional, monofunctional agriculture, aimed at increasing food production (Cvijanović et al., 2020).

The basic characteristics of rural tourism in Serbia are small and underused accommodation capacities, underdeveloped capacities of medium quality, incomplete basic and supplementary offer, low prices of services that characterize small economy, small investment capacities, inadequate promotion, inadequate labor force (Demirović et al., 2017). As for investing in rural tourism, it has practically been reduced to investing in public infrastructure, which is primarily of social importance, and only then important for the development of tourism. Revenues are generated from accommodation, food and beverage services to the greatest extent. Revenues from ancillary services are almost negligible.

The most significant problem is the economic profitability of rural tourism services, as demand is seasonal, capacity utilization rates are low, and

Table 1. Population distribution and rural population in the Republic of Serbia for 2011².

	Urban population		Rural population	
	population	% participation	population	% participation
<i>Serbia</i>	3,965,884	55.49	3,181,542	44.51
<i>Vojvodina</i>	1,097,332	55.38	884,084	44.62
<i>Centr. Serbia</i>	3,025,984	57.50	2,236,516	42.50
<i>Belgrade area</i>	1,321,055	81.73	295,244	18.26
<i>The other part</i>	1,704,929	45.19	2,068,272	54.81

investments needed to create and improve capacity for tourists and infrastructure are often high (Baum, 2007). Rural tourism can usually only be one of the sources of alternative income in the region, so its role in sustainable development is greatly influenced by the performance of other economic sectors. In transition countries, changes have become more frequent, affecting both urban and rural populations, but mostly women. The participation of women in the process of maximizing human resources in rural areas can affect the revitalization of the local economy, poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development (Fu et al., 2020). Women in their participation in rural tourism development affirm their activism through various handicrafts (Gal et al., 2000). Handicraft production is considered the second source of income for farms after primary agriculture, and it can be a promising branch that with minimal investment can provide self-employment and a source of income for over a thousand women from all over Serbia and contribute to tourism and promotion of the country and region (Perović, 1998; Thrane, 2008). Therefore, women's participation must not be negligible in tourism and the sustainable development of society and cultural values. Gender research in tourism helps to explain the current situation of the role of women in this sector. The work that women do in rural areas still seems "invisible" and is often underestimated and insufficiently recognized despite the fact that a woman is the main head of the family household. That is why it is necessary to understand, evaluate and affirm women (Kende et al., 1999). Women participate significantly less in the labor force than men, either as employed or unemployed persons (Gentry et al., 2007; 2018). Their activity and employment rates lag far behind men's rates, and the absence of a difference in unemployment rates may indicate that in unfavorable labor market conditions, women are more easily discouraged and stop looking for work and become inactive.

These relationships are largely established in accordance with patriarchal cultural patterns, which account for most unpaid housework and family care as women, and access to resources such as the household budget is often limited for women (Masika et al., 1996). The European Parliament's report on the situation of women in rural areas in the EU, one of the latest documents related to public policy aimed at improving the position of women in rural areas, pointed out that gender mainstreaming is a key strategy not only for promoting equality, but also for economic growth and sustainable development (Kara et al., 2012). Research shows that although women make up more than half of workers across Europe, their economic contribution is not strong. The position of these women was shown to be equal to that of women in agriculture. One third of women in rural Europe are employed in food production, and almost more than half in the food-related services sector (Elaine et al., 2017).

The fact is that only 29% of women in the European Union own property. In Serbia, the situation is even more drastic, as only 16% of women own property. These data point to the fact that they are involved in hard physical work but poorly paid, and that they are the most vulnerable group of the population. Of the 800,000 people employed on farms, women make up more than 60 percent (Cvijanovic et al., 2020).

The beneficiaries of agricultural policy measures are mostly farmers with larger farms, more educated and younger, and these are usually men; while women are the ones who are less educated, with smaller farms and older age (Baum, 2016). According to the data of the Republic Bureau of Statistics from 2017, out of 617,000 registered farms, about 85% are registered as men, ie every fifth woman was the owner of an agricultural farm. One-third of rural women in Serbia, under the age of 60, have pension and disability insurance. A major problem is the combination of lack of education, skills and interest in advancing women, and this further implies a weakness of 'internal' human resources that should generate a significant part of growth and development in rural areas².

3. Methodology

The authors of the paper conducted research in the city of Šid, which belongs to Vojvodina (Province of the Republic of Serbia). During October 15, 2015, the traditional International Day of Rural Women was held and the traditional event 'Fair of Creativity of Rural Women in Vojvodina' was organized. The organizer is the Institute for Gender Equality. The fair was attended by women from 200 associations, who presented their handicrafts, creativity and entrepreneurial potential. The research methodology is based on survey research through individual interviews with women. It is about direct verbal research or interviewing. Surveying as a technique of the research method has an extremely large application in the research of numerous social relations and processes.

The main strength of interview research is the ability to infer attitudes or behaviors from a population of interest based on a carefully selected sample of that population, in this case the female population. Tablet-assisted research (TAPI) is conducted in the field, where the respondent may be in direct contact with the interviewer but does not have to. This type of research is considered very productive because there is a possibility that the collected data will be sent to the database immediately after the completion of the survey. The women did not agree to participate in the focus groups, so the interview was conducted with each one individually (Bazić et al., 2017). The participants in the research area at the same time representatives of rural households and members of women's associations. In addition to the survey research, the

²www.stat.gov.rs

authors used the available literature and relied on similar research in the world.

Data processing and analysis were performed in the SPSS program, version 23.00, and the obtained data are presented in a table. The interview aimed to describe the phenomena, to explain more precisely the attitudes of the female population, regarding their position in the development of rural tourism. Categorical variables (features) are shown by relative (%) frequency. The central tendency of numerical features is shown by the arithmetic mean (m), and the scattering by the standard deviation (sd). The frequency distribution of numerical features was examined by indicators of skewness and kurtosis. Since all variables are normally distributed, parametric statistics methods were used. The t-test was used to examine the differences. The selected significance level is 0.05. The results are shown in Table 2.

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 99 women took part in the survey, who were ready to give complete answers to the questions. The largest percentage of survey participants ranged in age from 30 to 50 years (64.4%). Most of our interlocutors have completed high school (67.7%) and most have had work experience. Older women mostly lost their jobs due to the bankruptcy of the company in which they worked or because they could not reconcile business and family obligations. However, younger interviewees worked illegally, most often in trade or trafficking, and did not see opportunities to find employment in the formal sector.

The majority of survey participants stated that 64.6% had a desire to improve ($m = 1.54$; $sd = 0.787$). Only 17.2% were against training for work in rural tourism. The authors of the paper asked the research participants whether there are real opportunities for training and education, more precisely whether such training workshops are organized. A total of 59.6% of respondents gave a positive answer, and 35.4% negative ($m = 1.45$; $sd = 0.594$). There was no

training on standards, but there were other trainings on rural tourism. Depending on the municipality, some participants attended trainings. However, the importance of tourism for the village is not a question to which women have given an affirmative answer. Most of them declared themselves indefinitely, more precisely that they are not sure that tourism will contribute to rural development (59.6%). Only 11.1% of women are sure that tourism is the future for their village. The participants in the survey think that tourism can influence the independence of women in rural areas. A total of 83.8% gave an affirmative answer and 13.1% a negative answer ($m = 1.19$; $sd = 0.467$).

Family support for the inclusion of women in rural tourism development is very important. The arithmetic value was $m = 1.04$, and the standard deviation was $sd = 0.224$. A total of 97% of women gave an affirmative answer to this question regarding family support. Participants point out that engaging in rural tourism requires the joint work of the whole family. All household members have equally important but different roles. In some households, in addition to their regular jobs, women make art objects, souvenirs and sell them. All women surveyed said that tourism affects their budget. The arithmetic value for this item was $m = 1.00$.

The importance of rural tourism is reflected in the sustainable development and preservation of the traditions and culture of the people. Respondents of mostly the same opinion 65.7% confirmed the fact, and 18.2% denied ($m = 1.51$; $sd = 0.761$). Most of the interviewees believe that the development of tourism in their village increases the importance of women's work in the countryside (76.8%). Women in the countryside do not have working hours, they are mostly engaged in unpaid, housework, and the care of children (their own or grandchildren) and the elderly is exclusively theirs. In addition, most of them are engaged in agricultural work. Households inhabited by several generations and extended

Table 2. Item analysis - relative frequencies (%)

Items	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)	m	sd
There is a desire for improvement	64.6	17.2	18.2	1.54	0.787
There are real opportunities for improvement	59.6	35.4	5.1	1.45	0.594
Tourism is important for the village	11.1	29.3	59.6	2.48	0.691
Tourism empowers women	83.8	13.1	3.00	1.19	0.467
Family support is needed	97	2.00	1.00	1.04	0.244
Tourism increases the household budget	100	-	-	1.00	0.000
Tourism maintains the tradition and culture of the village	65.7	18.2	16.2	1.51	0.761
Tourism increases the importance of women's work	76.8	19.2	4.00	1.27	0.531
Tourism increases the education of rural women	57.6	22.2	20.2	1.63	0.803
Tourism encourages women to stay in the countryside	76.8	23.2	-	1.23	0.424
Tourism promises a better future	58.6	22.2	19.2	1.61	0.793
Patriarchal upbringing is represented	67.7	20.2	12.1	1.06	0.703
The position of women is very bad	97	-	3.00		0.345

Table 3. The t-test of statistical significance of differences in the arithmetic mean of items

	Education	m	sd	t (97)	p	95% CI	
						L	U
Bad position of women	Primary school	1.00	0.000	1.212	0.228*	0.236	0.057
	High school	1.09	0.417				

*m = arithmetic means; t (97) = t value and degree of freedom (df); p = statistical significance; CI = confidence interval, (L (lower), U (upper)).

families have a clearer division of roles: everyone is responsible for their work (orchard, greenhouse, livestock, cooking...), with household chores being distributed among female family members. The traditional division of roles is maintained in the domain of unpaid work while at the same time taking over men's jobs. Compared to rural men, the share of inactive and unemployed people is higher among rural women. Among employed women, as many as 58% are employed in agriculture. In addition, employment in agriculture takes place almost entirely within the household. A large number of women have the status of an auxiliary member of the household, more precisely, women extremely rarely participate in the ownership of the household and are not equal in deciding on the production and distribution of income.

The same is the case when it comes to the education and training of women in the countryside. Most of them believe that tourism increases the level of their knowledge and awareness of society, 57.6% (m = 1.63; sd = 0.803). A total of 76.8% believe that the development of rural tourism can contribute to the stay of women in the countryside, more precisely to reduce migration to urban areas. The arithmetic value for this item was m = 1.23, and the standard deviation was 0.424. By further conversation and surveying the interviewees, it was concluded that 58.6% believe that tourism will provide them with a better future, while 22.2% deny this fact. In the villages where they come from, patriarchal upbringing is present, which is confirmed by the survey of interlocutors where 67.7% gave an affirmative answer (m = 1.06; sd = 0.703). What the largest percentage of survey participants agree on is that the position of women in the village is very poor (97%).

Table 3 provides an insight into the t - test of statistical significance of the difference between the arithmetic mean of the given education items and the poor position of women in rural areas. Based on the obtained data, it is noticed that there is no statistically significant difference of arithmetic means, with: t statistical = 1.212, with statistical significance df = 97, and 95% confidence interval (L = 0.236; U = 0.057). The level of education does not affect the attitude of the interlocutors that the position of women is very bad. The largest percentage of them confirmed that.

5. Conclusion

Serbia has numerous natural and anthropogenic resources for the development of rural tourism. Preserved nature, mild climate, clean air, rich flora

and fauna, and unpolluted rivers and lakes, are the main resources of rural Serbia. At the beginning of its development, rural tourism was not accompanied by adequate incentives, so it was not given the importance it deserves. Adequate results have not been achieved, although many tourism organizations and societies are trying to include rural tourism in their offer (Charlesworth et al., 2014). Societies and associations of municipalities began to be organized, and agricultural cooperatives and the tourist and catering industry became involved in the development of rural tourism. The structural analysis of rural tourism showed that this type of tourism is very poorly developed in the observed area, which causes very low total revenues from this activity. Most of the active rural population is employed in agriculture, and family farms have serious difficulties in accessing the main markets. The great dependence of the rural population on employment in agriculture ranks Serbia among the countries with the highest agricultural population in Europe. In the process of transition, hundreds of thousands of jobs disappeared in factories where both men and women from rural areas worked. The privatization of cooperatives and state-owned agricultural enterprises has caused unemployment in the rural workforce and minimized opportunities for alternative employment of women from rural areas (Fu et al., 2020).

It is very difficult for women to achieve and reconcile work and family functions because they do not have sufficient support from institutions. This is also the case when it comes to women's participation in the development of rural tourism. Rural women have limited opportunities for employment, education and economic independence. There are numerous examples of discrimination, such as unpaid women's work in the family sphere. Women have much less property in their possession, they are linguistically invisible in official communication, because they are marked by male occupations, in everyday communication a bad attitude towards women is often expressed and sexist jargon is used. Research shows that real estate is predominantly reported in the name of a man. Women are the backbone of the village and they are very open to association, which has proven to be one of the key things to success. The differences between urban and rural populations are large and visible in all areas, from the health, education and social systems, to the decision-making process and participation in the average decision-making process (Fleischer et al., 2005). About 50% of rural women are registered as unemployed, which

means that they do not have social, pension or health insurance. The position of rural women is a burning issue in the field of gender equality, because social norms, traditional attitudes and stereotypes limit their progress resource of Serbia.

The authors of the paper conducted the research during October 15, 2019, during the traditional event dedicated to the International Women's Day in the countryside. The survey included a sample of 99 women, who gave a complete answer. The research aimed to determine and prove the difficult position of women in the countryside when it comes to the inclusion of women in the tourism sector. Research on social exclusion in rural areas of Serbia indicated a number of unfavorable characteristics of women's economic participation. Compared to rural men, the share of the inactive and unemployed is higher among rural women, the share of employees in agriculture is slightly lower and the share of employees in non-agricultural sectors is significantly lower. The analysis of the data led to the conclusion that most of the interlocutors believe that their position is unenviable, and that their involvement in rural tourism requires financial support, but primarily family support. It is known that a woman in the countryside in Serbia is inferior to a man for patriarchal reasons, which are still preserved in the villages. Women express their willingness to work and participate in rural activities, which are not only related to agriculture. In the specific research, they had the opportunity to comment on their involvement in the development of rural tourism. They are not sufficiently affirmed in this area, but research data show that their attitude towards tourism and profit from it is positive. The interlocutors believe that with the support of the family and the involvement of each family member, they can contribute to a larger budget. They also see the benefits of tourism in terms of expanding education and awareness in society. There is not much training in the field of involving women in this activity, but when they are organized, women are very happy to visit them. They also gave a positive attitude towards tourism through the statement that tourism contributes to the sustainable development and preservation of the tradition and culture of their village. A small percentage of interviewees have households trained to receive tourists. They expressed that they would like to have more guests because that way they would be more successful. The time spent preparing food and arranging the household for a small number of guests is almost the same as for a larger number of guests, but the income is much lower.

The significance of this research is reflected in the emphasis on the current position of women in rural areas and the importance of including women in rural tourism. Corrective measures may include: empowering women socially, culturally and economically, providing essential social connectivity to the population, potential hotbeds of resistance to homogenization threatened by globalization,

and resistance to gender inequality, the inclusion of crafts in tourism, revitalization old crafts carried out mainly by women, women's participation in rural development projects related to the application of sustainable tourism in their communities. In order to overcome all obstacles and affirm women in rural development to a greater extent, it is necessary to interconnect elements from the economic, educational, health, social, communal and other sectors, as well as to deal with complex mechanisms of economic decline and social exclusion in rural areas. It is necessary to plan the rural economy, define a multisectoral approach to rural tourism development, set up significant cross-sectoral cooperation, encourage education and influence the development of awareness among rural women, the importance of their workforce and participation in societies and economic activities, support and encourage women's cooperatives. promote the importance of rural tourism development, and inform women about the great role they can play in rural development, raise the quality of services and stimulate development, improve tourism infrastructure, promote investment and support of local organizations and the state, allocate financial resources and other resources to support diversification economic activities, improved agricultural production, connected producers, both with each other and with other economic actors.

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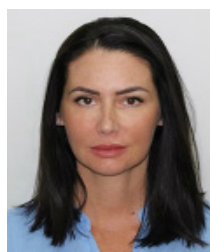
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