

SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS PART OF THE RURAL TOURISM OF VOJVODINA

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***Abstract:** Rural areas of Vojvodina provide excellent conditions for sports and recreational activities, as well as for recreational tourism and are actively involved in developing their economic, social and human potential in the right way. The subject of the study is to identify the key sports and recreational programmes as the basis for the development of sports and recreational tourism in the area observed. The aim of this study is to research the possibilities of transformation of rural areas in Vojvodina into organized areas suitable for the development of sports and recreational tourist facilities. Primary research consisted of field research in order to analyze excursion and sport sites and the material base, in order to determine the most attractive sites for the expansion of sports and recreational programmes and evaluate the current state of development, as well as the possibilities for further improvement and growth.*

Keywords: sports, tourism, recreational activities, rural areas, Vojvodina.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization, fast pace of life, changes in life habits and increasing periods of the day spent indoors and in front of the screen lead to the need for spending free time outdoors, in the fresh air. This affects the orientation of tourist movements from large cities to rural areas. Due to such tendencies, there are more and more justified studies dealing with the preservation of the environment of rural areas and the role and importance of the local communities in creating the tourist offer [1]. The current global health crisis (Covid-19), which represents one of the biggest challenges for the tourism sector as a whole, has further strengthened the need for people to stay in smaller communities, away from crowds and big cities. The results of the latest research (Covid-19 Survey Analysis Spring 2020), published by the European Rural Tourism Federation (EuroGites), indicate that in the future there will be greater interest in small businesses, cottages and private houses without shared facilities rather than the interest in large hotels [2].

In addition to the fact that one wants to spend their free time outdoors and in nature, there is an increasing need for active recreation in the natural environment. Therefore, there is a need to explore opportunities for the development of sports and recreational activities in rural areas and their connection with tourism. Modern research related to sports and recreational tourism in rural areas should rely on the possibility of connecting methods from different sciences (sociology, psychology, medicine, geography), which gives the necessary multidisciplinary approach [3]. It is particularly necessary to emphasize the role and importance of the local community in creating the tourist offer and in the development of sports and recreational tourism. The local population largely creates the tourist offer, especially in rural areas, and it is very important to instruct the population in the basic forms of exploitation of rural resources for sports and recreational tourism purposes [4]. This paper connects aspects of rural tourism development with various recreational activities. Adventure

tourism, gastronomic tourism, climbing, riding and health tourism, are some of the examples of activities related to the concept of rural tourism. One of the most known sub area of rural tourism is agro tourism, which centers more around farm-based attractions and activities [5]. According to studies by the following authors Roche[6], Weed [7] and Misener and Mason [8] trends in tourism over the last decade have shown that sports tourism is emerging as a very significant segment of the global tourist market [9].

This paper is based on the assumption that sports tourism, as a type of special interest tourism, creates certain benefits to destinations when introduced in the local development plans. Main tourism destinations are developing tourism product concepts revolving around sports. The main intention of multiple sport activity holidays is to practice several sport activities [9].

The aim of this paper is to research the possibilities of transforming the rural areas of Vojvodina, uncultivated or empty areas located between rural settlements that are unpopulated, into arranged tourist areas suitable for the development of sports and recreational tourism.

The paper analyzes the conditions for the development and implementation of sports and recreational programs in rural areas of Vojvodina from the aspect of communicative, attractive and receptive factors on the one hand and organizational and personnel factors and structure on the other. Also, the paper analyzes the zones of the largest cities in Vojvodina, potential emission centers (primary markets from which the largest number of sports and recreational tourists and recreationists can be expected), in order to define the rural areas located near them. The key sports and recreational programs that can be realized in the shortest possible time and which can represent a significant segment of the offer of rural tourism in Vojvodina were presented.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PREVALENT VIEWS

The definition of sport tourism has been a regular source of discussion within much of the sport tourism literature [10], [11], [12]. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to define the concepts of active vacation and vacation with multiple sports activities, as important segments of sports and recreational tourism. According to Standeven and De Knop [13], active vacation as a need of modern man, who lacks physical activity and contact with nature, is becoming synonymous with tourist vacation. The area of active rest is very broad and insufficiently defined, and includes a variety of activities (contents) intended for active and passive rest, which are directly related to healthy living, entertainment and leisure, and which contribute to the renewal of a person's physical and mental strength, their recuperation and recovery [14]. Active holidays with more sports activities are a special type of vacation in which tourists often participate - recreational or professionals, who want organized sports recreation programs, or visit such resorts and destinations that offer different types of organized sports and recreational activities in natural or enclosed environments [13].

In recent decades, in the structure of the tourist product, i.e. modern tourist offer, tourist animation programs stand out, among which their sports and recreational contents stand [15]. Opting for a particular sports and recreational program in the body of various tourist animation programs, tourists choose a framework for different activities that are organized and in which they will participate according to their affinities (tennis, basketball, skiing, football, skating, bowling, swimming, aerobics, etc.). Such tourists usually look for an opportunity to feel better through sports activities which entail some physical effort. Also, they are looking for an opportunity to learn something new, unknown and interesting through selected sport activities, especially those of a competitive nature [16]. Previous experiences and observations of experts for recreation in tourism show that sports and recreational programs must be set so that each guest can "find themselves" which spills over to their direct participation [17]. Holidays with several types of sports and recreational activities are most often done in: sports camps, luxury clubs, resort facilities or sports courses [18]. Multiple sport activity holidays offer a package of land and water based activities like multi activity breaks, multi-active holidays, weekends, camps and courses - offering opportunities to take part in and try out different sports and adventure activities over a short period.

3. METHODOLOGY, HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The primary research conducted for the needs of the work is field research in the rural areas of Bačka, Banat and Srem in the period from April to July 2021. The research entailed the collection of data in the field (field research) through a large number of interviews with managers and employees in companies engaged in activities related to tourism and sports in Vojvodina.

The aim of the research was to analyze the communicative (roads and signalization), attractive (rivers, alluvial plains and landscapes) and receptive factors (accommodation and catering facilities, sports and recreational facilities, fields and picnic areas) necessary for the implementation of sports and recreational programs. It was important to gain insight into the available human resources and the organizational and personnel structure of tourism and sports in the observed area. Part of the field research was related to conversations with the locals about the importance of developing sports recreation programs and connecting with tourism. The method used is that of structured and unstructured interview.

In addition to field research, various scientific methods were used, namely the inductive-deductive method, the method of analysis and synthesis and the method of observation.

The basic hypothesis is:

H1: In the rural areas of Vojvodina there are not enough organized sports and recreational programs that represent a significant segment of the offer of rural tourism

H2: Sports and recreational programs, with certain investments in the organizational and personnel structure and with the adaptation of sports and tourism infrastructure can become a significant segment of the rural tourism offer and can contribute to its improvement in the short term.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the research will be presented in three parts, in accordance with the set goals and subjects of the research. The first part consists of the results of research related to the geographical dispersion of rural areas in relation to the primary markets, i.e. emission centers from which the largest number of tourists can be expected.

The second part consists of the results related to the material base for the development of sports and recreational programs, human resources and organizational and personnel structure

In the third part, based on all the above, sports-recreational programs and models for the development of sports-recreational tourism in rural areas are defined.

4.1. Geographical dispersion of rural areas of Vojvodina in relation to the main emissive areas

Field research revealed that rural areas that are most suitable for the development and implementation of sports and recreational programs are those areas that are located near rivers or other bodies of water (lakes, canals, oxbow lakes). This is derived from the fact that water surfaces offer the possibility for different types of sports and recreational activities, and thus for organizing them that can include several activities, in order to create a more meaningful offer.

When we look at the geographical distribution of rural areas of Vojvodina in relation to natural attractions on the one hand and the distance from urban centers (emission centers where tourist demand is concentrated) on the other hand, we come to the conclusion that, in terms of diversity and attractiveness, the best potential for rural areas of southeastern Bačka have developed various sports and recreational programs. Observed from the aspect of geographical distance, southeastern Bačka is located near two large emission centers, Novi Sad and Zrenjanin. The rural areas of southeastern Bačka are well connected by roads with the surrounding settlements and emission centers and there is a relatively good tourist signalization. Specific relief dominated by Titelski breg, richness of hydrographic values (Tisa, Jegrička, DTD canal), beautiful plain landscapes and farmsteads are exceptional preconditions for the development of sports and recreational tourist programs in rural areas [19] (Kovačević, 2014). In addition to southeastern Bačka, North Bačka, i.e. farms around Sombor (“Dida Hornjakov Salash”, “Naš Salash” and “Sedam Dudova” farm) and farms in rural areas of Subotica (Đorđević Farm and Zvonko Bogdan Farm) can be the center of development of sports and recreational programs in this part of Vojvodina. Very attractive are the rural areas along the Veliki Bački Kanal, which provide many different sports and recreational activities and well landscaped excursion and recreation grounds, picnic areas and beaches. In Banat, the most attractive are the Vršac Mountains and the rural areas along the Tisa near Zrenjanin.

4.2. Analysis of the material base and organizational and personnel structure for the development of sports and recreational tourism programs

The analysis of attractive, communicative and receptive factors necessary for the development of sports and recreational programs in rural areas lead to the conclusion that Southeast Bačka has the best basis seen in all three elements. However, regardless of the good material predispositions, sports and recreational programs with several types of sports activities have not been developed in this area, i.e. the problem is the organizational and personnel structure.

The research pointed to the fact that sports and recreational spaces in rural areas mostly rely on human resources, animation, content programming, and that the material base without organizational and personnel structure is only a resource that will never turn into a meaningful tourist product.

Field research concludes that the material basis for the development of sports and recreational activities, contained in natural attractions, communicative factors and receptive basis at a satisfactory level and that with minimal investment could be adjusted for the development and implementation of sports and recreational programs as an integral part tourist offers in a very short time. In the rural areas of Vojvodina, there are preconditions for the development of a large number of different sports and recreational activities. Table 1 shows the types of sports and recreational activities and locations where they can be realized.

Table 1: Sports and recreational activities in rural areas of Vojvodina

Sports and recreational activities	Locations
Ball sports (football, basketball, handball)	Sport fields at the picnic areas
Golf	Golf Center in Žabalj
Walking, jogging, cycling	Trails around the farms
Collecting wild flowers and herbs	Titel Hill, Deliblato sands, Trails around the farms

Water sports (jet skis, water skiing, boating)	Tisa, Dunav, DTD Canal, Bega River (Begej), Jegrička River
Rowing, canoeing	“Old Tisa”, Tisa, Jegrička, Begej, Dunav
Sport fishing	Rivers, ponds and lakes
Paintball	Čenej, Palić
Horse riding	Farms and Hippodromes (Đurđevo, Karađorđevo, Subotica)
Paragliding	Aero-club “Titel”
Photo-safari	Nature Parks
Works in the field with locals	At the farms and rural households
Driving horse-drawn wagons	Recreational spaces around the farms
Hunting	Hunting grounds

It is important to note that a large number of sports and recreational activities are located in the zone of half-day excursions (in the 50 km area) and that they can be interconnected with different accommodation and catering facilities and together create an integrated touristic holiday offer with multiple sports activities in the rural areas of Vojvodina.

4.3. Models, Forms and concepts of development of sports and recreational programs

Sports and recreational tourism in rural areas should be developed through certain models and development concepts, which are defined depending on the needs of the target market and the characteristics of the area in which sports and recreational activities are implemented.

The research revealed that the models for the development of sports and recreational tourism that can be realized most quickly in rural areas are sports and recreational programs on farms (vacations with more sports activities), sports camps for children and adults, sports and educational workshops and sports recreational events in rural areas (traditional sports games).

The observed area shows that there are exceptional potentials for organizing vacations with several types of sports activities on farms. The farms have the necessary receptive basis, and connecting with sports clubs or independently organizing vacations with several types of sports activities for individuals or groups and companies (team building) is an increasingly important segment of the offer on the farms. Some managers realized in time the importance of including sports and recreational programs and animation in their offer, while a large number of facilities still rely on ethno style, cultural heritage and gastronomy, without introducing sports and recreational content in the offer.

Field research has identified farms with a diverse sports and recreational offer. Table 2 shows the farms, and sports and recreational activities that can currently be realized on them. Insight into the material base necessary for the development of sports and recreational activities, it is concluded that only four farms (out of a total of 23 covered by field research) offer opportunities for the implementation of sports and recreational programs with more sports activities.

Table 2: Current offer of sports and recreational activities on the farms of Vojvodina

Salash Đorđević Subotica	Salash Tatić Turija	Salash 137 Čenej	Lekin salash Sremka mitrovica
Tennis	Swimming	Futsal	Riding
Beach volleyball	Fishing	Volleyball	Fishing
Basketball	Boating	Riding	Walking
Bowling		Archery	Carriage rides
Futsal			Cycling

Team building programs are organized on the Djordjevic farm with the inclusion of sports and recreational activities, while the other three farms offer participation in activities of your choice. So far, they have not had the opportunity to cooperate with sports associations or organizations (yoga, Pilates, fitness, kickboxing, etc.). In addition to the mentioned farms, there are farms that cooperate with sports clubs, but which specialize in one type of sport. Tennis club Petlov Salash (near Novi Sad) has two slag tennis courts of standard size covered. It is located on the outskirts of Novi Sad in a beautiful natural setting. Near the tennis courts at 400 meters is the river Danube. Salas Pejic has the equestrian club "Donjon". The research came to the conclusion that on all the mentioned farms they rely only on the material structure that is located within their facilities, and that they use very little natural attractions that are in the immediate vicinity (water surfaces, hiking trails, meadows, etc.). This indicates that the people involved in creating the offer are not aware of the importance of including sports and recreational facilities in the tourist offer or the benefits they could have from the implementation of such programs. What is a great advantage is that the implementation of these programs requires only minimal investment, primarily in the organizational and personnel structure, and that positive effects can be expected as soon as possible.

In order for vacations with more sports and recreational activities on farms to become a significant segment of the offer, it is necessary to connect all organizations dealing with tourism (all local tourist organizations and the Tourist Organization of Vojvodina with all interest groups) and especially with the locals, with mandatory education on the importance of developing such programs and pointing out ways in which the population can be directly involved and benefit from them. With minimal investment, in a very short time, it is possible to organize yoga weekends, Pilates camps, nutrition and recreation programs and various types of sports and recreation programs. These programs should include: morning gymnastics (Pilates, yoga, fitball, stretching), morning active programs (hiking, picking wildflowers, working in the field with the local population, cycling, rowing or boating, activities on leads, afternoon sports and recreational activities) which can be selected from the list of activities, according to fitness and mental and physical condition. In addition to sports and recreational programs on farms, models of sports and recreational tourism that have good preconditions for development are sports camps, sports and educational workshops and organization of events related to traditional sports games in rural areas of Vojvodina. The production mix of these models is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Models of sports and recreational tourism

Sports and recreational programs on farms	Sports camps	Traditional sports games
Pilates Yoga Fitball Stretching Hiking Working in the field Cycling Rowing Boating Paragliding	Fitness camps Rowing camps Sports camps for kids Golf camp Handball camps	Traditional old sports that include animals Competitions in grain harvesting Characteristic old sports Folks old-around

All the above mentioned models of sports and recreational tourism, as specific forms, the specific characteristics of individual spaces, specific organizational and marketing approach, diversity, specially designed facilities and specific staff qualifications are also required. What is important to point out is that if organizational and personnel conditions were created for one of the mentioned development models, other models would be complementary and would develop side by side, with the use of material and human resources.

Considering the current state of development of sports and recreational programs that represent a significant part of the offer of rural tourism in Vojvodina, it was observed that in Vojvodina there is only one sports and educational camp that continuously attracts a large number of visitors and includes them in animation programs with many different activities. It is about the Vidra Camp in Panonia, a small village near Bačka Topola. Vidra Camp exists since 2010 and is a sports-educational camp intended for children of preschool and school age. The camp offers participation in 18 sports activities (morning gymnastics, archery, horseback riding, carriage rides, group sports, games without borders, rowing, swimming, fishing, etc.) [19]. The whole camp is led by eleven permanent male and female coaches who are trained for all activities and have experience in working with children. In addition to the coaches, there are also volunteers who help in the best and safest realization of the camp. The camp also offers one-day excursions for school and preschool children.

The mentioned camp is a good example of how, with minimal investments in the material base, various sports and recreational activities can be realized in rural areas. Following the example of good organization, animation and program contents of the Vidra Camp, it is possible to organize similar programs at a large number of picnic areas and along the rivers of Vojvodina (in Žabalj, Novi Bečej, Titel, Kać).

All the mentioned types of camps shown in Table 3 are widespread in Serbia and it is known to which activities they relate. It is necessary to explain the concept of fitness camps, in order to understand where and under what circumstances they can be realized. Fitness camp is a type of program that includes the so-called military regime of exercise, dieting, and / or accommodation. This program is realized in gyms or specialized facilities (hotels, halls, tents, etc.), in the presence of trained trainers. The programs are designed so that the participants of the camp gain and improve their strength and fitness through various group, interval and intensive trainings, with the duration of one hour for a certain number of days. Fitness camps were established in the United States, and in 2005 they gained popularity in the United Kingdom. [20]. To improve the overall achievements and challenges, more and more fitness camps include rock climbing, wood splitting, trail running, and bag fitness. exercise with fitness bags), exercise with fitness weights. The term fitness camp is currently used in the fitness industry to describe group fitness classes that promote both camaraderie and teamwork, along with weight loss [21]. Prerequisites for the organization of fitness camps around farms and in rural areas of Vojvodina are all there. It is necessary to connect with fitness trainers and organizations in order to connect tourist attractions with organizational and personnel structures, in order to form a fitness camp program that is safe and offers great quality.

The organization of traditional sports games can also be one of the models for the development of sports and recreational tourism in rural areas. The importance of traditional sports games is mostly reflected through sports and recreation, culture (intangible cultural heritage), and tourism, though it may also be combined. According to Liponski there are over 3000

traditional sports games in the world which are or have the potential to be an element of the tourist offer [22]. Traditional sports competitions, which promote the traditional way of life and cultural heritage, are held exclusively in rural areas, and are usually promoted through event tourism [23]. Sixteen such events are held on the territory of AP Vojvodina (Table 4). Based on the dominant activity or the concept of games, the event was divided into: competitions in grain harvesting; traditional sports that include animals; characteristic old sports; folk athletics [24].

Table 4. Events dedicated to traditional old sports in Vojvodina

Type of event	Name of event	Place	Number of visitors	Month	Initial year of maintenance
Grain mowing competitions	“Dužijanca” (takmičenje risara)	Žitna polja oko Subotice	100000	July-august	1911
	“Seljačka olimpijada Vojvodine”	Bačka Topola	5000	July	2014
	“Seljački parti”	Mokrin	3000	August	2019
	“Seljačka olimpijada”	Mol	2000	July	2017
Traditional sports that include animals	“Ovčarski dani”	Sakule	10000	March	1997
	“Ovčarski dani”	Kumane	5000	May	2014
	“Ovčarski dani”	Ležimir	3000	Septem.	2014
	“Ovčarski dani”	Obrovac	3000	April	2009
	“Ovčarski dani”	Čurug	4000	May	2016
Characteristic old sports	“Banatske šore”	Tomaševac	20000	July	2001
Folk athletics	“Lička olimpijada”	Apatin	10000	July	2010
	“Krajiški višeboj”	Banatsko Novo Selo	10000	July	2010
	“Seleuški višeboj”	Seleuš			
	“Seoska olimpijada”	Sefkerin	5000	Septem.	2016
	“Plemenske viteške igre”	Lovćenac	2000	May	2001
	“Vojvođanska olimpijada starih sportova”	Bačko Gradište	5000 300	Septem. August	2010 2010

Source: Adapted according to [25]

Older traditional sports games, which have a tradition of organization, are important manifestations of sports and recreational, but also cultural character, which gather a significant number of visitors (Table 4). They are emphasized in this paper in order to connect the local population that nurtures the tradition of old sports with other interest groups engaged in tourism in rural areas, in order to organize sports-educational workshops and programs on farms that would rely on old, traditional sports.

5. CONCLUSION

Considering the current state of development of recreation and sports in rural areas of Vojvodina and the possibility of implementing sports and recreational programs, we conclude that in rural areas of Vojvodina there are not enough organized sports and recreational programs that represent a significant segment of rural tourism, which confirms the basic research hypothesis H1.

The primary problem for further development is the organizational and personnel structure. Organizations dealing with the planning, formation and organization of the tourist offer in Vojvodina do not understand or do not take seriously enough the importance and role of sports and recreational tourism as a significant segment of rural tourism development. The research pointed out the necessity of investing in the organizational and personnel structure, inclusion of the local population in animation programs and cooperation of local tourist organizations with sports federations and societies of Vojvodina, in order to connect human resources (tourism experts, sports coaches, physical education teachers, journalists, lawyers, doctors).) with interest groups that deal with tourism in order to create quality sports and recreational programs. In addition to planning the development of recreational programs and investing in human resources programs, sports and recreational programs can become a significant segment of the rural tourism offer and can contribute to its improvement in the short term, thus confirming hypothesis H2.

Further plans for the development of sports and recreational tourism in Vojvodina, show it is necessary to consider sports and recreational programs as a significant segment of the offer of rural tourism and as potential initiators of the development of rural tourism in Vojvodina. It is necessary to connect all interest groups, stakeholders with sports federations, societies and sports organizations, adding the multidisciplinary approach, because only such an approach will contribute to the creation of an integrated tourism product of sports and recreational tourism.

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