

# THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAIN FACTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM ON STARA PLANINA MOUNTAIN

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**Abstract:** *Stara Planina (Old Mountain) has excellent predispositions to the development of rural tourism, which are satisfied by but few mountains in our country. Its biological, geological and cultural heritages are very rich. However, this area was not an attractive tourist destination due to a large migration of the local population. The natural beauties of Stara Planina, in combination with the culture, tradition, gastronomic specialties and music of Eastern Serbia, can become a recognizable tourist brand that will improve the image of the region and the state itself, because of which Stara Planina strong potential for rural tourism development is being discovered. This paper is aimed at identifying the main factors influencing changes in tourism development and the selection of appropriate strategies, which in turn will influence identification and assessment during the planning of the strategic directions of rural tourism development. The factor analysis is the method that allows the identification of the main factors affecting changes in tourism development and one of the most popular multivariate techniques aimed at identifying and understanding the basic idea, i.e. the common characteristics of several variables and a reduction in the number of variables in the analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Stara Planina, rural tourism, agriculture development, basic factors of development*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is an important instrument for the economic development of mountainous, as well as other rural areas. These areas are attractive to tourists because of the advantages of the rural environment itself with its historical tradition, ethnic and geographical characteristics.

In most European countries, the rural population has increasingly been accepting tourism development as a strategy for sustainable local development [1]. In many areas, rural tourism develops gradually, either as a result of the engagement of local entrepreneurs or the developing companies whose main task is to attract tourists, or as a result of the activities carried out by tourists who become aware of the fact that that area attracts visitors' attention in connection with the activity local entrepreneurs will respond to. The development of tourism in a rural area is not only a matter of matching tourists' requirements with local offers, but is also the question of evaluating the local convenience itself. Rural areas are unique due to their spatial and sociocultural identities. What is important is that adequate rural development practices call for an understanding of the relationships that people share with the natural characteristics and phenomena they are surrounded by [2].

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The determination of the basic factors influencing the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina, as well as the economic development of the local community, are some of the objectives of this research, with a possibility of achieving the sustainability of the rural settlements and tourism development. If special attention is paid to the education of the local population in order to improve the quality of services, with a tendency to increase the number of tourists, conditions will be created for a better comfort of the rural settlements, where the local population has both economic and other motives to continue to live in the countryside. This causes return to traditional and typical values and authenticity, as well as a variety of experiences, adventures and deeper insights into the emergence of new tourism products with new environmental, natural and social parameters [3], [4]. In modern tourism, the goal of each tourist destination is to create a unique identity, i.e. a difference, in relation to the competition, which will be the basis for its growth and development in the competitive market [5].

Generally, tourism can also be seen as a natural process of change because a correct understanding of this process enables the dynamics of tourism development, as well as the identification of the main factors that influence changes in tourism development and the selection of appropriate strategies, which in turn influence the identification and assessment during the planning of the strategic directions of rural tourism development [6].

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Rural tourism in the world is growing, due to increased demand in the tourism market, as well as public support for its development. This is particularly characteristic for developed countries [7]. Maksimović, Urošević and Petrović states that rural tourism, initiated and controlled by people living in a particular local environment, offers new opportunities and possibilities for the economic prosperity of the local population, and at the same time affects the positive attitude towards the development of tourism in general [8]. According to the definition of the Council of Europe, rural tourism is a tourism with all the activities that are carried out in that particular area, and the most important characteristics of this type of tourism are the peaceful environment, the absence of noise, the preserved environment, communication with the hosts, domestic food and familiarization with rural jobs [9]. Wilson, Fesenmaier and Van Es emphasize that the crucial for rural tourism development is the collaboration between rural tourism entrepreneurs, also “rural tourism development and entrepreneurship cannot work without the participation and collaboration of businesspersons directly and indirectly involved in tourism” [10].

What is a fairly solid basis for the development of rural tourism in Serbia is a large number of traditional agricultural households, the preservation, attractiveness and richness of its natural resources, as well as an increasing interest of the international tourism market in rural tourism experiences [11]. Therefore, a sustainable development of rural tourism, as well as the management of it, implies a reduction in the negative impacts on the environment, with a possibility of their improvement, which causes the management of the care of the environment similar to quality management [12].

The development of tourism at the Stara Planina destination can also quite easily create negative consequences, especially if it goes beyond control. Controlled inclusion in the rural tourism of Stara Planina, however, may bring solid income, both economic and social, to the majority of the population [13]. A lack of finance is often the stumbling block for many of those who live at this destination. The tourism strength itself, which should reflect in the economic and sociocultural

impact of the tourism of this region, which on its part is missing, can be found in the role women have in the tourism of this region, as well as in the joint overcoming of obstacles as an accompanying element of rural tourism development [14]. Therefore, the maximum involvement of the local self-government, tourism organizations and entrepreneurs conducting other activities are necessary in order to provide the maximum contribution to the sustainable development of rural tourism at this destination. They are certainly the ones of the bearers of strategic plans, so they must bear in mind a large number of the strategies that are simple and can always find a solution to a possible unequal distribution of investments [15]. From the previous research that was conducted by Sanagustín, Moseñe Fierro and Gómez [3], tourist demand is increasingly aiming at avoiding the established tourism destinations, whereas returning to traditional and typical values and authenticity is increasingly sought, where new tourism products appear with new ecological, natural and social parameters. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out a series of research studies so as to define the strategic directions of the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina.

A strategic approach to rural tourism development means the creating of the conditions and strategies primarily by the local community and local-government representatives with an aim to form the basis on which a further development of tourism in a particular rural area will be founded [16]. However, Ruhanen [16] states that there is an insufficient implication or yet that there are too small efforts made by the Government, especially by local authorities, in terms of sustainable tourism development and simultaneously of rural tourism. Rural areas are unique due to their spatial and sociocultural identities. What is important is that adequate rural development practices call for an understanding of the relationships that people share with the natural characteristics and phenomena they are surrounded by [17]. According to Stefanović and Kicosev [12], through a development concept, a symbiosis of the key categories and criteria of entrepreneurship and the environment is achieved because, in the conditions of limited natural resources, they are simultaneously oriented towards developmental goals and the demands of an increasing number of people. In fact, the essence of this model of managing natural tourism destinations consists of the following key determinants: the interaction of development and the protection, improvement and rational use of all goods of the living environment, as well as the interdependence, complementarily and integrity of the development and protection policies that fully adhere to the processes and legality in the ecological system [18].

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This paper is aimed at detecting those factors that depend on the development of rural tourism on Stara Planina. The research was carried out in the territory of the local communities of Eastern Serbia in the Stara Planina mountain zone. The research was anonymous. Survey questionnaires were used as a research tool and the number of the validly filled-out ones was 300. For the purpose of grading the responses obtained, the five-point Likert scale was applied, and the data processing was performed by using the SPSS 23.0 software package. For the survey questionnaire that the respondents rated on the scale from 1 to 5, the following indicators were used:

- Preparing a general tourist offer;
- The formation of such a tourist offer that will provide tourists with a wide range of diverse content in order to meet their needs;
- By applying aggressive marketing, propaganda and market performance, the goal is to make the public, i.e. domestic and foreign tourists, aware of the extraordinary beauties and possibilities offered by the rural tourism of Stara Planina;
- A better use of the favorable geographical location of Stara Planina;

- Recognizing the importance of rural tourism as a possible means of the integration and sustainable development of villages and rural areas, as well as a possible brand on the international tourism market;
- The application of the professional marketing approach that would be overlooked by local governments, tourism organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector for rural tourism in order to achieve significant promotion in the region;
- Organizing natural and cultural heritage into a single territorial system, as one of the factors driving the development of the region;
- Integrations of culture, the environment, characteristic and sustainable tourism;
- Agriculture development as an important part of the regional economy;
- The inclusion of rural households in tourism;
- Educating and informing hosts and members of households for and about, respectively, dealing with this activity;
- Making rural areas closer to the local community;
- Improving business conditions;
- Supporting the creation of new local entrepreneurship and strengthening the existing one, increasing employment of, especially, the unemployed young population;
- The development of the economic and noneconomic activities that meet tourists' needs (catering, trade, craft and personal services, banks and post offices, cultural services, etc.);
- Environmental Protection;
- The development of the utility infrastructure;
- Protecting the natural and cultural resources of Stara Planina and organizing integrated and sustainable development;
- Strengthening the human resources and supporting the youth;
- The valorization and organization of all the natural, cultural and human resources in function of rural tourism development.

#### 4. RESULTS

For a further analysis, a factor analysis was applied, which, based on the covariance between the manifest variables, is aimed at determining a smaller number of the latent variables (factors) that explain this cognition between the manifest (observed) variables. The factor analysis was carried out through several steps: the calculation of the complete table of the coefficients between all the original variables; the calculation of the factor load from the matrix of the correlation coefficient; the rotation of the common factors for a greater comprehensibility; the interpretation of the common factors, including also the choice of an adequate name, and the calculation of the factor equations for each observation unit in order to obtain the index numbers.

Based on the data obtained by the descriptive analysis, a correlation matrix between the variables was developed, which shows the intensity of the strength of the links between the variables from the questionnaire. The coefficient correlational scope ranges from -1 to +1, and the level of the coefficient of dependency amongst the variables for this analysis exceeds  $\pm 0.5$ , due to the fact that there are the correlation coefficients greater than 0.5 and that the following analysis is justified, i.e. that the data are suitable for the determination.

The methodology further requires yet another confirmation, so that the following tests for a more precise assessment of the significance of the use of the test, the so-called throughput test, are done.

|  |                    |         |
|--|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. |                    | 0.936   |
|  | Approx. Chi-Square | 615.346 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity                    | Df                 | 190     |
|  | Probability        | 0.000   |

Table 1: The throughput tests for the main components analysis

The value of the throughput test (the *Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy*) is greater than 0.9, whereas another throughput test (*Bartlett's Test of Sphericity*) is also significant at the error level of 0.000. These values of the bandwidth tests for the analysis of the main components indicate that the scale by which the respondents were interviewed is justified as a method of measuring this phenomenon. After these checks, the methodology requires the calculation of the joint variation which the variables have amongst themselves through the so-called extracted variance. The maximum variation weighs the 1, which means that the values closer to it are more common in terms of variation with other variables.

| Indicators   | Initial | Extracted variances |
|--|---------|---------------------|
| Preparing a general tourist offer  | 0.662   | 0.534               |
| The formation of such a tourist offer that will provide tourists with a wide range of diverse content in order to meet their needs   | 0.753   | 0.645               |
| By applying aggressive marketing, propaganda and market performance, the goal is to make the public, i.e. domestic and foreign tourists, aware of the extraordinary beauties and possibilities offered by the rural tourism of Stara Planina                         | 0.787   | 0.740               |
| A better use of the favorable geographical location of Stara Planina   | 0.764   | 0.742               |
| Recognizing the importance of rural tourism as a possible means of the integration and sustainable development of villages and rural areas, as well as a possible brand on the international tourism market  | 0.812   | 0.732               |
| The application of the professional marketing approach that would be overlooked by local governments, tourism organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector for rural tourism in order to achieve significant promotion in the region | 0.757   | 0.571               |
| Organizing natural and cultural heritage into a single territorial system, as one of the factors driving the development of the region   | 0.722   | 0.618               |
| Integrations of culture, the environment, characteristic and sustainable tourism   | 0.809   | 0.690               |
| Agriculture development as an important part of the regional economy   | 0.731   | 0.641               |
| The inclusion of rural households in tourism   | 0.738   | 0.647               |
| Educating and informing hosts and members of households for and about, respectively, dealing with this activity  | 0.691   | 0.578               |
| Making rural areas closer to the local community   | 0.750   | 0.677               |
| Improving business conditions.   | 0.770   | 0.725               |
| Supporting the creation of new local entrepreneurship and strengthening the existing one, increasing employment of, especially, the unemployed young population  | 0.711   | 0.610               |
| The development of the economic and noneconomic activities that meet tourists' needs (catering, trade, craft and personal services, banks and post offices, cultural services, etc.).  | 0.776   | 0.653               |
| Environmental Protection   | 0.774   | 0.700               |
| The development of the utility infrastructure  | 0.835   | 0.813               |
| Protecting the natural and cultural resources of Stara Planina and organizing integrated and sustainable development   | 0.847   | 0.774               |
| Strengthening the human resources and supporting the youth   | 0.813   | 0.728               |
| The valorization and organization of all the natural, cultural and human resources in function of rural tourism development  | 0.728   | 0.687               |

Table 2: Utility explained by variation in variables

Between the indicators, there is a common variability explained by the absolute variation over the variance. The stated amount of the variance (the saturation of the component) can be maximally correlated with the number of the indicators.

The purpose of the analysis is to determine the indicators that vary widely and, in that way, actually correlate with a new dimension that forms a group of the identical factors affecting a phenomenon. This is further implicative of the use of the test that will calculate the total variability, i.e. the amount of the same, by applying the Keizer criterion, through which the total variability is extracted and declared higher than the 1 score.

Which of the indicators will be retained in the analysis is only decided on after the application of the so-called factor space rotation in order to facilitate the interpretation of the results. By applying the rotation of the factor space, those indicators (factors) which will be retained in the analysis are detected. By applying the orthogonal rotation through one of the defaults, an indicator will be obtained which, with the high values of the variance, varies in new impact factors.

| Compo-<br>nents | Basic equivalents of variance |                  |                 | Extracted summarized<br>component variability |                  |                 |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---|------------------|-----------------|
|                 | Total                         | % of<br>variance | Cumulative<br>% | Total   | % of<br>variance | Cumulative<br>% |
| 1               | 12.535                        | 62.676           | 62.676          | 12.207  | 61.036           | 61.036          |
| 2               | 1.596                         | 7.982            | 70.657          | 1.295   | 6.476            | 67.513          |
| 3               | 0.788                         | 3.939            | 74.596          |   |                  |                 |
| 4               | 0.707                         | 3.535            | 78.131          |   |                  |                 |
| 5               | 0.647                         | 3.233            | 81.365          |   |                  |                 |
| 6               | 0.569                         | 2.844            | 84.208          |   |                  |                 |
| 7               | 0.502                         | 2.512            | 86.720          |   |                  |                 |
| 8               | 0.376                         | 1.882            | 88.602          |   |                  |                 |
| 9               | 0.345                         | 1.726            | 90.328          |   |                  |                 |
| 10              | 0.305                         | 1.526            | 91.855          |   |                  |                 |
| 11              | 0.258                         | 1.290            | 93.144          |   |                  |                 |
| 12              | 0.224                         | 1.119            | 94.263          |   |                  |                 |
| 13              | 0.197                         | 0.987            | 95.250          |   |                  |                 |
| 14              | 0.195                         | 0.974            | 96.225          |   |                  |                 |
| 15              | 0.190                         | 0.952            | 97.177          |   |                  |                 |
| 16              | 0.137                         | 0.687            | 97.864          |   |                  |                 |
| 17              | 0,128                         | 0,641            | 98,505          |   |                  |                 |
| 18              | 0,116                         | 0,581            | 99,086          |   |                  |                 |
| 19              | 0,104                         | 0,518            | 99,604          |   |                  |                 |
| 20              | 0,079                         | 0,396            | 100,000         |   |                  |                 |

Table 3: The total variability analysis of the main components

According to the rules of the analysis, only those components (factors) in which the Keizer criterion is greater than 1 (units) are retained. These are the first two components which the variance of the indicators correlates with in 67.5% of the cases. The two groups of the components are retained, and will be named later.

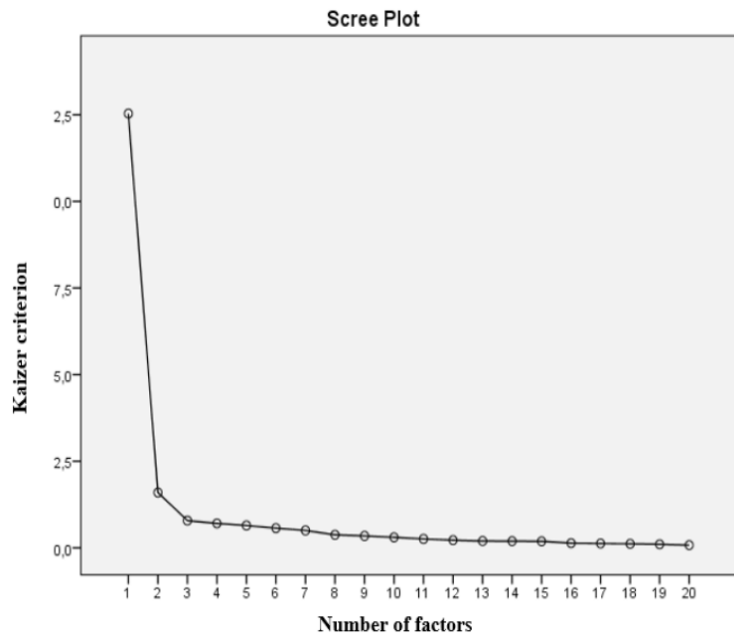


Figure 1: Diagram Pass Factors

In Figure 1, the factor transference diagram is shown, from which diagram a clear fracture point can be observed behind the second component (factor). In the further discussion of the results of the research study, we retain the two components (factors) obtained by the factor analysis which are considered to represent the two dimensions, or the subscales. The first component explains 61% of the variation, whereas the second accounts for 6.5% of the variation.

The methodology of the analysis encompasses the correlation matrix for the two factors, so that it is possible to learn from the same the variable that has as high a coefficient as possible correlating with the factor – which means the one closer to the 1.

| Indicators   | Factor |        |
|--|--------|--------|
|  | 1      | 2      |
| Preparing a general tourist offer  | 0.730  | -0.014 |
| The formation of such a tourist offer that will provide tourists with a wide range of diverse content in order to meet their needs   | 0.719  | -0.359 |
| By applying aggressive marketing, propaganda and market performance, the goal is to make the public, i.e. domestic and foreign tourists, aware of the extraordinary beauties and possibilities offered by the rural tourism of Stara Planina                         | 0.797  | -0.323 |
| A better use of the favorable geographical location of Stara Planina   | 0.708  | 0.491  |
| Recognizing the importance of rural tourism as a possible means of the integration and sustainable development of villages and rural areas, as well as a possible brand on the international tourism market  | 0.831  | 0.205  |
| The application of the professional marketing approach that would be overlooked by local governments, tourism organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector for rural tourism in order to achieve significant promotion in the region | 0.720  | -0.228 |
| Organizing natural and cultural heritage into a single territorial system, as one of the factors driving the development of the region   | 0,717  | 0.322  |
| Integrations of culture, the environment, characteristic and sustainable tourism   | 0,796  | 0.237  |
| Agriculture development as an important part of the regional economy   | 0.684  | 0.416  |
| The inclusion of rural households in tourism   | 0804   | 0.022  |

|   |       |        |
|---|-------|--------|
| Educating and informing hosts and members of households for and about, respectively, dealing with this activity   | 0.760 | 0.018  |
| Making rural areas closer to the local community  | 0.823 | 0.016  |
| Improving business conditions   | 0.824 | 0.212  |
| Supporting the creation of new local entrepreneurship and strengthening the existing one, increasing employment of, especially, the unemployed young population                       | 0.781 | -0.016 |
| The development of the economic and noneconomic activities that meet tourists' needs (catering, trade, craft and personal services, banks and post offices, cultural services, etc.). | 0.795 | 0.144  |
| Environmental Protection  | 0.757 | -0.356 |
| The development of the utility infrastructure   | 0.840 | -0.329 |
| Protecting the natural and cultural resources of Stara Planina and organizing integrated and sustainable development  | 0.838 | -0.267 |
| Strengthening the human resources and supporting the youth  | 0.853 | 0.024  |
| The valorization and organization of all the natural, cultural and human resources in function of rural tourism development   | 0.817 | 0.141  |

Table 4: The original components matrix with its saturations based on each indicator

For the purpose of an easier interpretation, as has previously been stated, the rotation of the component saturation will also be performed because the first and the second factors are not correlated with each other to a great extent.

| <b>Indicators</b>  | <b>First component</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| Preparing a general tourist offer  | 0.538                  |
| The formation of such a tourist offer that will provide tourists with a wide range of diverse content in order to meet their needs   | 0.768                  |
| By applying aggressive marketing, propaganda and market performance, the goal is to make the public, i.e. domestic and foreign tourists, aware of the extraordinary beauties and possibilities offered by the rural tourism of Stara Planina                         | 0.800                  |
| A better use of the favorable geographical location of Stara Planina   | 0.173                  |
| Recognizing the importance of rural tourism as a possible means of the integration and sustainable development of villages and rural areas, as well as a possible brand on the international tourism market  | 0.459                  |
| The application of the professional marketing approach that would be overlooked by local governments, tourism organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector for rural tourism in order to achieve significant promotion in the region | 0.678                  |
| Organizing natural and cultural heritage into a single territorial system, as one of the factors driving the development of the region   | 0.296                  |
| Integrations of culture, the environment, characteristic and sustainable tourism   | 0.413                  |
| Agriculture development as an important part of the regional economy   | 0.208                  |
| The inclusion of rural households in tourism   | 0.566                  |
| Educating and informing hosts and members of households for and about, respectively, dealing with this activity  | 0.538                  |
| Making rural areas closer to the local community   | 0.584                  |
| Improving business conditions.   | 0.450                  |
| Supporting the creation of new local entrepreneurship and strengthening the existing one, increasing employment of, especially, the unemployed young population  | 0.576                  |
| The development of the economic and noneconomic activities that meet tourists' needs (catering, trade, craft and personal services, banks and post offices, cultural services, etc.).  | 0.476                  |



|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Environmental Protection  | 0.794 |
| The development of the utility infrastructure   | 0.834 |
| Protecting the natural and cultural resources of Stara Planina and organizing integrated and sustainable development        | 0.790 |
| Strengthening the human resources and supporting the youth  | 0.601 |
| The valorization and organization of all the natural, cultural and human resources in function of rural tourism development | 0.493 |

Table 5: The rotated components matrix with its saturations based on each indicator of the first component

| Indicators   | Second component |
|--|------------------|
| Preparing a general tourist offer  | 0.494            |
| The formation of such a tourist offer that will provide tourists with a wide range of diverse content in order to meet their needs   | 0.236            |
| By applying aggressive marketing, propaganda and market performance, the goal is to make the public, i.e. domestic and foreign tourists, aware of the extraordinary beauties and possibilities offered by the rural tourism of Stara Planina                         | 0.316            |
| A better use of the favorable geographical location of Stara Planina   | 0.844            |
| Recognizing the importance of rural tourism as a possible means of the integration and sustainable development of villages and rural areas, as well as a possible brand on the international tourism market  | 0.722            |
| The application of the professional marketing approach that would be overlooked by local governments, tourism organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as the private sector for rural tourism in order to achieve significant promotion in the region | 0.332            |
| Organizing natural and cultural heritage into a single territorial system, as one of the factors driving the development of the region   | 0.728            |
| Integrations of culture, the environment, characteristic and sustainable tourism   | 0.721            |
| Agriculture development as an important part of the regional economy   | 0.773            |
| The inclusion of rural households in tourism   | 0.571            |
| Educating and informing hosts and members of households for and about, respectively, dealing with this activity  | 0.537            |
| Making rural areas closer to the local community   | 0.579            |
| Improving business conditions.   | 0.723            |
| Supporting the creation of new local entrepreneurship and strengthening the existing one, increasing employment of, especially, the unemployed young population  | 0.528            |
| The development of the economic and noneconomic activities that meet tourists' needs (catering, trade, craft and personal services, banks and post offices, cultural services, etc.).  | 0.653            |
| Environmental Protection   | 0.265            |
| The development of the utility infrastructure  | 0.342            |
| Protecting the natural and cultural resources of Stara Planina and organizing integrated and sustainable development   | 0.386            |
| Strengthening the human resources and supporting the youth   | 0.606            |
| The valorization and organization of all the natural, cultural and human resources in function of rural tourism development  | 0.666            |

Table 6: The rotated components matrix with its saturations based on each indicator of the second component

## 5. RESULTS DISCUSSION

After the creation of the rotated components matrix with its saturations based on each indicator of the first component (factor), the variables grouped into the first component and named The Promotion of a Broad Spectrum of the Preservation of the Living Environment with the Accompanying Infrastructure and Service were singled out.

The preparation of a general tourist offer, which would provide tourists with a wide range of diverse content, should certainly be done in order to meet tourists' needs. In this context, it is necessary to apply aggressive marketing, propaganda and the market appearance so as to set the goal and introduce the natural beauties that the rural tourism of Stara Planina offers. An aggressive marketing policy, oriented towards the development of this type of tourists, must be harmonized with the implementation of the projected ideas of the generic tourist offer, [19] because tourist propaganda is one of the instruments of the tourism policy for achieving certain goals. In this way, there would certainly be an increase in tourist fluctuations as a result of the propaganda policy, which in this case is also a potential driver of the economic development [20] of the rural areas of Stara Planina. In the opinion of the majority of the respondents, the local self-governments' task, as well as the task to be performed by numerous tourism organizations and the non-governmental sector, would be to become involved in this activity not only as the accompanying subjects, but also as the promoters of such propaganda activities. The members of the rural farms that would be involved in the tourism activity with all of the accompanying infrastructure and accompanying activities do not have to look for additional workplaces outside their places of residence. By applying modern management in the household, the existing capacities can strategically be allocated so as to meet tourists' both current and future needs [21], [22]. The development of rural tourism on Stara Planina also implies bringing the rural areas closer to the local community in order to protect the living environment. An important strategic step in the development of the rural tourism of Stara Planina is the strengthening of the human resources in the tourism activity. The basic characteristic of employment in the tourism sector is the need for a large number of unskilled or semi-skilled, seasonal workers because there is a great need for the jobs requiring no professional qualification. Such a low qualification structure, on the other hand, shows that it takes relatively little time for their professional training and improvement. Human resources in rural tourism are characterized by a high level of the employees' age structure. At the same time, it reflects the state of the economy and society because all those, unable to follow the trends of modern knowledge and education, are left without a work engagement in other activities, and in that way seek salvation in the tourism industry. On the other hand, rural tourism simultaneously also requires dynamics, enthusiasm and the professional young people ready to respond and adapt to every challenge. A positive perception of a tourism destination, i.e. its pleasant first impression on the tourist, must be encouraged by the young people who are ambitious, professional and knowledgeable of several foreign languages, who, by the way, have all the relevant pieces of information necessary for tourists.

After the creation of the rotated components matrix with its saturations based on each indicator of the second component (factor), the variables grouped into the second component and named The Engagement of All the Other Accompanying Economic Branches and Resources, as well as the Services in that Field, were singled out.

The favorable geographical position of Stara Planina carries with itself a recognizable importance for the development of rural tourism in function of the further economic and ecological development of the rural area and the local community. It is possible to organize the natural

and cultural heritages into a single territorial system as one of the factors driving the development of the region through the integration of culture, the ambience, typicality and sustainable development, where dynamic and long-term effects of institutional organizations' action enable an effective management of the development of rural tourism and the natural environment [23]. The development of agriculture as an important part of the regional economy is certainly an important strategic direction. Healthy agricultural households are able to respond to the requirements of tourist demand when rural tourism is concerned. The promotion of agricultural products in direct contact with tourists may not guarantee a direct economic benefit, but it certainly provides the basis for making a comparison of the prices and quality of agricultural products at other rural destinations [24], [25], [26], [27]. This leads to the improvement of the economic conditions and the development of the economic and nonbusiness activities that meet tourists' needs, which on their part are simultaneously the key challenge for providers of tourism services in rural areas, i.e. in rural local communities, to face.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Tourism, and especially rural tourism is of great importance for the economic development of eastern Serbia, because it is an initial driver of the development of other economic activities and increases employment. Therefore, rural tourism is given strategic importance as one of the opportunities for developing the tourist potential of this part of Serbia.

By detecting the groups of the similar statements expressing the same basic idea, the two main factors have been singled out on the concrete example of the identification of the strategic directions for the development of the rural tourism of Stara Planina. The main components (factors) of the development of the rural tourism of Stara Planina are as follows: the promotion of a wide range of the preservation of the living environment with the accompanying infrastructure and service, and the engagement of all the other accompanying economic branches and resources, as well as services, in that field.

Based on the results of the research study, concluded conclusion can be drawn that the rural area of Stara Planina has increasingly been gaining in importance. The richness of its natural resources, its untouched nature and its traditional agricultural households, as well as an ever-increasing interest of the tourism market in the experiences of rural tourism are all the more significant, for which reason the drafting of the program of the development of the tourism of Stara Planina is also significant.

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