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INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON
TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS – GEVGELIA



GOCE DELCEV UNIVERSITY OF STIP
FACULTY OF TOURISM AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS

P R O C E E D I N G S

THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
**CHALLENGES OF TOURISM
AND BUSINESS LOGISTICS IN
THE 21ST CENTURY**

Stip, September 13th, 2019

North Macedonia



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PREFACE

The Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics in Gevgelia, at the Goce Delcev University of Stip, hosted the Second International Scientific Conference, "Challenges of Tourism and Business Logistics in the 21st Century".

The conference was held on 13 September 2019 in Stip, with 35 works of 62 authors from Serbia, Croatian, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Macedonia that were presented at the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference is exchange of ideas and experiences of the participants coming from Macedonia and abroad, and establishment of cooperation for further development of tourism and business logistics in Macedonia and beyond.

The results of the Conference are visible through publication in a collection of papers, which is presented to a wider scientific audience and the public. In this way, we want to promote the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, promote Stip as the most visited settlement in the eastern part of Macedonia.

Stip,
September, 13th, 2019

Editor
Nikola V. Dimitrov, Ph.D. *Dean*

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SCIENTIFIC PAPERS

THE ROLE OF ECOTOURISM IN MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS IN SERBIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA

Marija Belij¹; Cvetanka Ristova²

Abstract

In recent decades, there has been a change in people's interest in traveling, by demanding more variety in needs, types, and patterns of travel. Special-interest form of tourism such as ecotourism is now more putting on a journey emphasis on environmental and social aspects. The concept of ecotourism travel includes programs that minimize the negative aspects of mass tourism on the environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local community. Destinations of ecotourism are due to its natural value placed under the umbrella of protection, and tourism that is organized in them is sustainable and strictly controlled. Integrated management of the mentioned destinations is of great importance for their proper development and exploitation of unique natural values that they have, while preserving them for future generations. The paper will also present examples of good practice of managing the protected areas in the territory of Serbia and North Macedonia, as well as the involvement of the local population through the promotion of tourist offer.

Key Words: *protected areas, management, sustainable development, ecotourism*

JEL classification: *L83, Z32*

Introduction

Today, tourism is an inevitable form of development of a protected area. In what direction this development will move depends on the manager in the protected area and the policy makers of the development of the given area. It is therefore of the most importance that, even in the first stages of the development of a protected area, recognizes the importance of ecotourism as a form of sustainable tourism and sustainable development globally. Each country tends to create a tourism policy and thus leads the planning and management of tourism development. Researchers opinion on the economic impact of the global ecotourism economy are different and some of them believe that ecotourism is developing faster than 20% of the world tourism market (Stamenković et al., 2016). Ecotourism, as a market, has seen intensified growth within tourism as a branch of the economy. According to the World Tourism Organization with an annual growth of 5% in global terms, representing 6% of the world's gross output, as well as 11.4% of consumption, the ecotourism market deserves special attention. Ecotourism in global terms very quickly becomes the most popular type of vacation (UNWTO, 2017). Protected natural areas are complex and attractive values for tourism development with a number of comparative advantages. It is evident that the development of tourism, unlike other industries, relatively easily aligns with the goals of environment protection, and that valorization and

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presentation of natural and cultural values of protected areas increases awareness of the value of the nature and need for their protection. Tourism in protected areas needs to be managed for environmentally and ecologically sustainable outcomes. Tourism encourages the development of other complementary sectors (agriculture, forestry, traffic, service trades, etc.) and brings significant economic effects, both to local people and to society as a whole.

Taking into account the facts that there is approximately 6.5% of protected territory in Serbia and 9.05% in North Macedonia, and that the intentions of both countries are to increase the area under national and international status of nature protection, it is obvious that the development of tourism in protected areas has equally economic and environmental perspective. Management of protected areas has to be founded on the concept of nature conservation, which is not focused only on conservation of selected elements of natural features, but should embrace maintenance of the ecosystem, support natural processes, protect nature as a whole and benefit local communities and in that manner becoming of tourism products.

Numerous authors point out that management of protected areas could face with the main challenges that occur during the implementation of the concept of ecotourism in order to promote the potentials of protected areas (Bernard et al., 2009; La Page, 2010; Luo et al., 2016; Poon, 1993). Certain management problems can be identified by monitoring the situation in protected areas, such as illegal construction, inappropriately established municipal infrastructure, inadequate exploitation of natural resources and mineral raw materials etc. Ecotourism will often take place in areas of ecological importance containing rich and/or fragile ecosystems as well as endangered species of fauna and flora, why it can be threatening to the conservation of nature and to local traditions and indigenous cultures. It can also lead to the commercialization of culture, change of traditional social norms and values.

Literature review

The concept of ecotourism became popular, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of the negative social and environmental impacts associated with mass tourism. Increasing concerns about the impact of mass tourism on both the natural environment and local communities and cultures, together with the emergence of the sustainable development concept, led to the rise in popularity of sustainable forms of tourism, including ecotourism. One of the first definitions was given by Ceballos-Lascurain to whom ecotourism is travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987). It was precisely the modified version of this definition that was adopted as the International Union for Conservation of Nature's definition, which is as follows: ecotourism is the responsible travel to relatively conserved natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate their natural and (accompanying) cultural features, that promotes the importance of conserving these areas, has minimal negative impact on the environment, and provides for socio-economic effects to a local community (<http://iucn.org/about/work/programmes>). Jacobson and Robles (1992) also note that ecotourism necessitates high-quality maintenance of resources such as landscapes, rivers, forests, and wildlife. Chiutsi et al. (2011) underline the fact that, however satisfactory such a definition of ecotourism is, it falls short in defining the impacts that this form of tourism can have on the cultural and ecological environment of the destination. Several

authors point out that while there has to be a balance between the socio-cultural and environmental sustainability, there must also be economic stability (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003; Fennell, 2001; Goodwin, 1996; WWF, n.d.). The most inclusive definition of ecotourism was eventually proposed by the IES as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015).

Ecotourism destination represents protected natural area (mainly national parks) or a landscape with perceived natural characteristics and rich biodiversity, where the intensity of developed and urbanized is at a very low level, and where tourism is not developed at the expense of fundamental natural resources. Ecotourism can strengthen the links between conservation and sustainable development (Mondino and Beery, 2018). Previous research shows it is possible, and Tortuguero National Park in Costa Rica, (Jacobson & Robles, 1992) and the Amazonian regions of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008) serve as good examples. In relation to this, training people with local knowledge as guides and interpreters is an important sustainable development strategy (Harris, Griffin, & Williams, 2002). Examples of international best practice confirms that with the development of ecotourism in protected areas in addition to protection and conservation of biodiversity and cultural values, they can certainly improve regional development (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996; Hong and Chan, 2010; Sayyed et al., 2013; Puhakka and Saarinen, 2013; Öztürk, 2015; Cobbinah, 2015; Santarem et al., 2015).

Numerous authors have explored the possibilities for developing sustainable tourism in protected areas in Serbia (Banjac et al., 2016; Belij et al., 2016; Белиј, 2017; Бранков, Жујовић, 2008; Dolinaj et al., 2009; Đerčan et al., 2016; Jakšić, Stamenković, 2013; Jegdić, 2010; Kalenjuc et al., 2016; Stojanović, 2003; Stojanović et al., 2009; Stojanović et al., 2014; Stojanović, Pavić, 2016) and North Macedonia (Calkov, Angelkova Petkova, 2013; Dimitrov et al., 2018; Magdincheva–Sopova et al., 2017; Metodijeski et al., 2018), as well as their management (Чучуловић и др., 2012; Đurđić i dr., 2011; Filipović, Petrović, 2015; Stamenković et al., 2016; Stojanović, Savić, 2013; Stojković et al., 2015).

System of protection of nature and potentials for ecotourism development in Serbia and North Macedonia

The growing popularity of ecotourism in protected areas, simultaneously with possible manifestations of negative impacts, it is explained, in accordance with the definition of ecotourism as a selective form of tourism with minimal negative effects, which can contribute directly and indirectly to species and habitat maintenance, including responsible environmental behavior, ecological management of the destination and sustainable development of local communities (Belij and Belij, 2017). Government must play a leading role in providing the necessary finance and budget, adequately management circumstances which would allow the private sector running smoothly and efficiently. According to Stamenković et al. (2016) that means that the government should: facilitate the efficiency of private sector activity; provide a favorable macro-economic environment; guarantee respect for law and order, as well as dispute resolution; provide the necessary and adequate infrastructure; ensure the development of human resources; protect the public interest without obstructing the activities of the private sector with more regulations; promote private sector activity and confirm the role of small enterprises and facilitate their business.

Current state of the nature conservation in Serbia is based on the regulations of the Law on the Protection of Nature (2009). For the first time after several decades based on this law, problem of the protection of nature in Serbia was covered by this fundamental systemic judicial act which is coordinated with international standards in this area (Đurđić, 2017). Nature protection is, by this Law, set with the postulates that respect high degree of nature preservation, natural assets, and sustainability, application of measures and conditions for the nature conservation through the essential protection and cooperation, but also through close implementation of international law from this area (Law on the Protection of Nature, 2009). There are many necessary accompanying legal documents and bylaws to this systemic law, some of them are National Parks Law (2009), Environmental Protection Law (2009), Forestry Law (2010), Wild Game and Hunting Law (2010) and many others. Protected natural resources in Serbia consist of protected areas (national park, nature park, landscape of outstanding features, nature reserve – general and special, nature monument and protected habitat), protected species (strictly protected wild species and protected wild species) and protected movable natural documents. According to the data from the central register from Institute for Protection of Nature Serbia (2019) there is 6.51% or 575, 310 ha of protected Serbian territory, which is an area whose size considerably deviates from the area intended by the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2010). Namely, in the year 2021, 12% of the country's territory should be protected (Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, 2010). The 461 protected areas, out of which there are 5 national parks (Fruška Gora, Kopaonik, Đerdap, Tara and Šar planina), 17 nature parks, 20 landscapes of outstanding features, 68 strict and special nature reserves, 3 protected habitats, 310 nature monuments and 38 areas of cultural and historical significance, are currently included in the protection plan. Besides for protected areas, there are 1760 strictly protected wild species of flora, fungus and fauna, as well as 868 protected wild plant species, mushrooms and animals that are included in the protection (www.zzps.rs). According to the program “Man and Biosphere”, the Nature Park “Golija”, along with the protected surrounding of Studenica monastery, was designated as Biosphere Reserve “Golija – Studenica” in 2001 and “Bačko podunavlje” in 2017. Also, in the territory of Serbia there are natural areas of importance for the European and world heritage such as 10 Ramsar sites, 42 internationally important bird areas (within the program Important Bird Area / IBA), 61 internationally Important Plant Area (IPA), 40 Prime Butterfly Areas / PBA and 61 areas proposed for Emerald European ecological network (www.zzps.rs).

One of the best practice examples of the quality level of tourism presentation of natural values is Special Nature Reserve Zasavica (managed by non-government organization “Pokret gorana”). In a short period, it has become one of leading tourism destinations among the protected areas in Serbia. Moreover, it is obvious increased interest in tourism development and introduction of new tourism services (visitor information centres, educational trails, info boards, facilities for birdwatching, boat “Umbra”) in protected areas that exchange experience, establish some form of international cooperation or participate in cross-border projects. For instance, Special Nature Reserve Gornje Podunavlje received European Chart for sustainable tourism (Europark) in 2015, parallel to designing new tourism content (educational trails). The largest national park of Serbia – Đerdap develops an offer of ecotourism. Some of the ecotourism activities already exist (hiking and enjoying nature, bird watching, biking), but the offer should be expanded (photo safari, watching wildlife, riding horses, canoeing, the opportunity to meet and share experiences with the local population, summer eco-camps, tourist research expeditions, competition in orientation, etc.). As the official nomination of Đerdap

National Park as the first Serbian geopark is underway it is to be expected that the future geotourism will contribute to the developmental chances of this area (www.npdjerdap.org).

In 2018, Republic of North Macedonia developed “The National Strategy for Nature Protection” within the framework of the project: “Nature Conservation Program of Macedonia”, which is being realized with financial assistance by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This integral strategic is imposed document for the protection and sustainable use of nature, covers all components of nature, as well as objects and areas that are distinguished by special natural values and therefore deserve to be treated with an appropriate degree of protection. Nevertheless, the need for National ecotourism strategy and alternative forms of tourism was already addressed by the Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism in the country, since North Macedonia has the ideal conditions for developing ecotourism that need to complete the existing attractions of the destinations. Ecotourism should complete the vacuum space between demand and supply among tour operators and the interest in travel and new destinations for free travelers. According to Ornat & Reinés (2007), categories of protected areas in North Macedonia are classified as level 2 of harmonization with IUCN categorization, or categories are practically identical to those of IUCN, though IUCN is not referred to specifically in the national law. The following categories of protected areas and their respective goals of management are specified in Articles 66-90 of the Law on Nature Protection: Category I - (Ia) Strict Nature Reserve, and (Ib) Wilderness Area; Category II - National Park; Category III - Natural Monument; Category IV - Park of Nature; Category V - Protected Landscape; and Category VI - Multipurpose Area. The 86 protected areas, out of which there are 2 Strict Nature Reserve, 3 National Parks, 67 Natural Monument, 12 Park of Nature, 1 Protected landscape and 1 Multipurpose Area. Several areas in the North Macedonia have international status of protection, and higher number of areas important for birds, plants and butterflies have been identified and designated in accordance with international criteria. The proposed Representative Protected Areas System (RPAS) is consisted of 99 areas: 34 already protected, 42 proposed for protection (according to National Spatial Plan – MEPP, 2004) and 23 additionally proposed areas. The portion of the land in North Macedonia covered by this proposal is 20.25% which is in agreement with the CBD target for 2020 and EU requirements/target. Many of the biodiversity important sites had to be excluded from the system due to conflicts with the human activities (Melovski et al., 2011).

The network of protected areas in the Republic of North Macedonia includes 81 areas covering around 9.05% of the national territory. The largest portion is occupied by the three National Parks – Pelister, Galichica and Mavrovo with around 4,5%, Natural Monuments cover 2.7% and multipurpose area Jasen 1% of the country’s territory. Relatively small area (0.4%) is occupied by Strict Natural Reserves, Protected Landscapes with 0.21%, while the smallest portion of 0.1% is covered by the category of Park of Nature. At national level, species diversity is represented with around 18.000 taxa of the wild flora, fungia and fauna. It is of particular importance that as many as 976 endemic species exist in Macedonia, of which 870 are Macedonian endemics. Total of 270 plant communities with domination of grassland and forest communities have been registered in the Republic of North Macedonia (www.moep.gov.mk). Ecotourism in the North Macedonia best finds its practice in the villages Ljubojno and Brajcino, both located on the slopes of Mount Baba, in the Prespa region. The surroundings of the villages abound with lush vegetation and a diverse forest that is suitable for long walks along the marked hiking trails. In the lower parts, the oak forest is mostly present, while in the higher parts (up to

2000 meters above sea level) there is pure beech and spruce forest. The increase of tourists in this region resulted the establishing of the Association for Sustainable Development - Brajcino in 2003 as a result of the initiative for development of ecotourism and the activities of the Project for Preservation of Pelister Mountain (www.brajcino.mk).

Promotion of potentials for the ecotourism development in Serbia and North Macedonia

The largest effort in promoting ecotourism by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was achieved by Centre for Responsible and Sustainable Development of Ecotourism (CENORT), a nonprofit organization whose one of the goals is fostering the development of special forms of tourism (www.cenort.rs). In order to promote the ecotourism of Serbia, in 2013, it was launched in Serbian and English "EcoVirtour", web presentation and mobile application of ecotourism sites in Serbia. In this presentation, all elements of sustainable tourism and ecotourism are integrated: sustainable management of protected areas, protection of the environment, protection and promotion of cultural heritage and the life of the local population, while encouraging their economic well-being in accordance with the global criteria of sustainable tourism (www.serbiaecotour.rs/en). Tourist portal "THE CULTERTRIP" under the concept of ecotourism, specifically ecotourism experience in Serbia, proposes visits to the farms in Vojvodina and Fruska Gora, organic farming, visit Ramsar sites, visit the house on the river Drina, campsite in Zlatibor and visit artistic alternative markets in Belgrade. The information reveals the diversity and variety of the offer, with no more specific details. Portal "INCOMING SERBIA" offers an interesting multimedia presentation based on the offer of one-day and multi-day trips to cultural and historical sites throughout Serbia. "LONELY PLANET" under the search of eco-tourism in Serbia offers a mix of articles on cultural destinations, wine testing, city visits and visits to the Đerdap National Park, but without the final information leading to the realization of the trip. There are no tourist products related to Serbia under the name or sign of ecotourism on the "TRIPADVISOR" website. The Tourist Organization of Serbia provides selected information about individual locations with very poor-quality visual presentation and user experience. There is no emphasis on ecotourism. On the "Birdwatchserbia" website, you can find a lot of information about birdwatching sites, but the latest current tours provided by 2015 are available. Most domestic classic agencies also offer one-day or two-day trips to the nature of Serbia, which are mainly based on visiting religious sites with a long lunch and perhaps some activity, such as boat rides or visiting waterfalls.

The most massive travel organizers in terms of ecotourism are mountaineering societies and alliances that offer daily and multi-day trips for their members at low prices (mountain actions), which, in addition to hiking activities, include accommodation in hiking houses, or with hosts, as well as campsites in the nature, and certainly provide insignificant contribution to the local community. They also educate the general population and tend the tradition of preserving and protecting nature. The most active creators of the trips in the field of ecotourism, adventure and cyclotourism in Serbia are "A.C.E. Adventure" from Niš and "WildSerbia" from Valjevo. In their organization, they offer one-day and multi-day tours to the Western, Central and Eastern parts of Serbia. Their tours are intended for foreign as well as domestic tourists and companies, with "WildSerbia" more attentive and extreme sports in nature. "ACE Adventure" is the subcontractor of the "Highlights of Serbia" tours - the only tours the British giant in the field of outdoor tourism "EXPLORE" offers to tourists on its market.

According to current investments, it seems that one of North Macedonia's strategic commitments from economic development point of view is the development of tourism. Several strategic documents have been developed in the recent period with regard to tourism development on national level: National Strategy for Tourism Development, 2009-2013, National Tourism Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia, 2016-2021 prepared by Kohl & Partner who should be seen as a continuation of the National Tourism Strategy 2009-2013, National Strategy for Rural Tourism, 2012-2017, National Strategy for Health Tourism, 2012-2018, Sub-strategy for the development of sports tourism with an action plan 2015-2018, Sub-strategy for the development of MICE tourism and Sub-strategy for the development of traditions and events in Republic of Macedonia. For the purposes of tourism development, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has promoted establishment of tourism development zones (TDZ). Tourism development zone has been defined in the Law on Tourism Development Zones (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 141/12) as a specific fenced and marked area which is functional whole established for tourism development by introduction of standards in the segment of services, as well as efficient use of resources by application of the highest ecological standards where activities are performed under conditions specified in the law. The Law will initially cover eight locations sized between 13 and 50 hectares in the areas of Struga, Prespa, Dojran and Ohrid. From among announced locations, three are situated within the boundaries of NP Galichica (TDZ "Ljubanishta", TDZ "Stenje", and TDZ "Oteshevo") (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2018).

Apart from the activities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the competent Ministry of Economy and Agency for Promotion and Support of Tourism carried out on national level, plans for tourism development at regional or local levels have been prepared as of lately. In these plans, promotion of various forms of alternative tourism, ecotourism, hunting tourism, rural tourism, establishment of planning, recreation and biking paths, etc., prevails. All these documents (national, regional, local) reveal poor familiarity with the potentials offered by biological diversity of the Republic of North Macedonia. Regarding the issue of ecotourism, two municipalities in the eastern part of North Macedonia developed their own strategies: "Development of eco / rural tourism in the Municipality of Bosilovo" and "Strategy for development of ecotourism in Municipality of Berovo". Also, the planning of tourism development does not pay sufficient attention to effects on nature and especially biological diversity, and tourism zones for mass tourism are often planned in protected areas or other significant localities. Ecotourism is a potentially important economic branch in North Macedonia which could be founded on the high diversity of flora, fauna and ecosystems in certain regions (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, 2018). One of the most significant projects was "Sustainable development through ecotourism and environmental education in protected areas" financed by the German agency GTZ. It was implemented in Galichica National Park by the Alliance for Lake Cooperation in Ohrid and Prespa with the help of six NGOs from Serbia, Albania and Bulgaria and the UNDP project (2010) "Strengthening the Ecological, Institutional and Financial Sustainability of Macedonia's National Protected Areas System".

Conclusion

Although it is certain that ecotourism is not leading strategic orientation of tourism development of either Serbia or North Macedonia, it wouldn't be wise to neglect so far underutilized

contribution to the formation of the image of these countries as a state with well-preserved, authentic, and rare natural heritage. The preservation of the ecotourism potentials is an absolute condition for long-term maintenance of the recreational tourism values of both countries, Serbia and North Macedonia. Also, increasing the area under protection during next period, could significantly contribute to preservation of the most important natural and tourist values and could create favorable prospects of ecotourism in these countries. Although Serbia and North Macedonia have a good resource potential for the development of ecotourism, examples of protected natural resources which promote natural values through the organized tourist activities of special content that are environmentally oriented and justified, and organized with the professional tour guide service are still rare. Still, it is not possible to get complete overview of the realized number of visitors and incomes gained in this way by the management of protected areas. Also, it is evident a lack of formulated ethical standards for ecotourism, certifications based on international recommendations and ecolabels.

For the sustainability of protected areas, ecotourism would be the most appropriate industry, which could contribute to the sustainability and its further development. In countries with limited economic resources, such as Serbia and North Macedonia, project development of sustainable ecotourism in protected areas requires a strategic approach based on step by step principle which can lead to continuous improvement of performances and realization of the economic sustainability concept. Ecotourism is also a potential tool to improve sustainability by modifying human social behavior in regard to environmental conservation.

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