ICT in promoting and interpretation in protected areas – example of Serbian national parks

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In recent years, the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the environment protection and promotion has attracted great attention. ICT can improve the understanding of environmental issues in humans, as well as their political implications. In research, ICT application is generally considered as a way to use this technology for the benefit of the environment. Today, communication processes are strongly associated with the use of Web 2.0 tools, working on desktop computers and mobile devices. Such advantages and challenges of modern ICT's are quite relevant for large protected areas (e.g. national parks). Nonetheless, destination success depends on its capacity to create and promote the competitive tourism product according to preferences and requirements of potential and existing demand. For these purposes, in addition to ICT's, geographic information systems (GIS) play an important role.

When it comes to tourism offer, a good quality GIS may be significant for management and decision making. On the other hand, for tourism demand in particular can be important Web site based on the GIS use with a high level of interactivity. Tourists may use GIS to make travel decisions, for travel planning, gathering information about the destination, easier navigation, etc.

The possibility of obtaining information is of interest for the tourist demand. Therefore, the use of technology and the presence on the Web has significance in the national parks management, as tourist destinations that have multiple roles - pro-
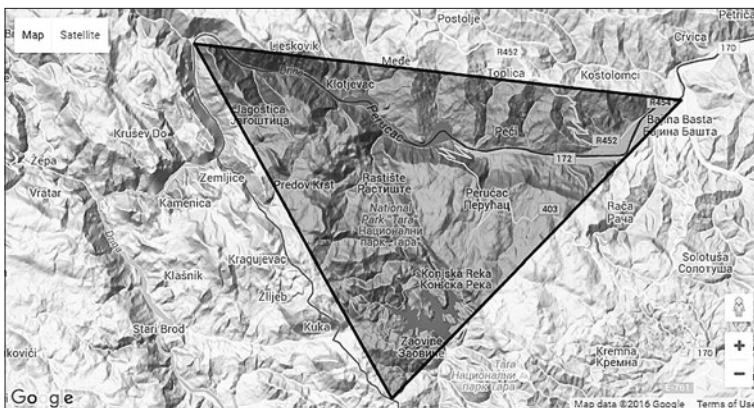

Figure 1. *Google map as a part of the national park Tara website*
Source: http://www.nptara.rs/np-tara-online/google-mapa.html

viding tourist services, education and protection of natural and cultural resources. The presence on the Web and provided information, constitute an integral part of tourism product and influence the visitor experience quality acquired before, during and after the visit to the national park. Regarding this, one of the research goals is to determine how tourists perceive the importance of GIS in national parks and to what extent the use of geographic information systems affect visitor satisfaction. Also, the study will analyze how much the improvement of Websites through the use and integration of geographic information systems, provide an opportunity for additional informing, education about national parks and improving the travel experience. The initial hypothesis in the paper reads as follow:

– GIS application on the Serbian national parks Websites enhances tourism offer and positively affects the visitor satisfaction.

Some researchers () believe that protected areas are still not fully used the potential of modern information and communication technologies. Therefore, another research goal is to evaluate the national parks websites. The results may be useful for managers in planning activities and implementation of innovative technological changes. This analysis has shown that the use of ICT in the protected areas can be of great importance in the scientific community, but also can play a key role in the context of the business sector.