

May the concept of ecolodge and ecohotel enhance the development of ecotourism in national parks of Serbia?

Vladimir Stojanović, Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia,
vladimir.stojanovic@dgt.uns.ac.rs

Filip Đoković, Faculty of Business Valjevo, Singidunum University, Serbia,
fdjokovic@singidunum.ac.rs

Introduction

Regarding nature conservation as one of the significant aims of ecotourism (Buckley, 2009; Stojanović, 2011) and the fact that this type of tourism is frequently tied to protected areas, the essential question of the ecotourism importance issues in national parks of Serbia needs to be raised.

Tourism development in national parks should follow the sustainable development criteria and enhance positive effects of this sector impact (Jovičić, 1997), but also to create prerequisites for ecotourism development in concordance with its principles. For instance: (1) **activity** that is based upon natural values and their protection, (2) **philosophy** of nature, people and local culture respect, (3) **strategy** that offers solutions for nature protection, (4) **marketing** that promotes nature protection, (5) **principles** that insist on joint efforts of tourism and environment (Walderback, 1995). Each of the principles may find its place in hospitality which is also important in sustainable tourism development, with regard to the increasing number of protected areas (Damnjanović, Đoković, Petrović-Petronić, 2016). Ecolodges are basic accommodation type in ecotourism in national parks. Tourism development through building ecolodges where philosophy meets ecotourism principles may essentially enhance nature protection in national parks and act as ecotourism generator.

The need for research of interrelations of (eco)tourism, accommodation capacities and nature protection in national parks of Serbia may and should contribute to sustainable tourism development, since insufficient attention has been devoted to tourism sector in the Strategy of Sustainable Development in Serbia.

Study Area and Methods

The research comprises four national parks in Serbia: Fruška gora, Đerdap, Tara and Kopaonik (Table 1), which represent ecological, natural and cultural variety of Serbia both as a country and a tourism destination. The variety is observed within a broad spectrum of geological, pedological, climatic, hydrological and biological factors of the environment (Amidžić, 2005). The territory of the national parks and their surroundings comprise numerous accommodation capacities that reflect current condition, scope of tourism development and indicate restrictions of the model of management in the area (Damnjanović, Đoković, 2013). The aim of the research is not only the analysis of the level to which ecolodges and ecohotels meet the criteria, but also the observation of the broader context of the fulfilled conditions for ecodestination development.

Preliminary analysis and discussion

Despite tendencies, plans and achieved progress in the past 15 years, Serbia has not been recognized as a destination country at the international tourism market. Furthermore, conventional content and destinations (mountains, events, cities, rivers) dominate the plans and programmes of development, whereas national parks as ecodestinations (with all the theoretical and practical content for this destination type) have not reached their true position. According to this, accommodation capacities that foster ecohotel and ecolodge business or best practice in sustainable tourism sector have not been observed yet. The conclusions that comply with the topic of the paper have been reached:

- Ecolodges and ecohotels, according to the largest number of criteria both theoretical and practical, have been under-represented within national parks of Serbia.
- Mass tourism in certain national parks prevails upon alternative and ecotourism; hotel accommodation is dominant and in concordance with those market segments (this particularly refers to NP Kopaonik as the most important destination of winter or ski tourism, where carrying capacity has been continually disrupted for the past three decades)
- Standards and best environmental practices in hotel industry have been sporadic, without environmentally friendly certificates and even the tendency to obtain one.
- Prizes which may act as a stimulus for hospitality businesses that comply with eco standards have not been established yet. Moreover, the prizes may become a type of marketing incentive for others to introduce eco standards. The plans that anticipate building and activation of ecolodges as an important type of accommodation in ecodestinations are almost nonexistent (except for National Park Fruška gora).
- Finally, commercial forestry is allowed in national parks of Serbia (which is not the case in former Yugoslav republics Slovenia and Croatia) which shadows the potential economic impact of tourism in less tourism oriented national parks, i.e. primary role in development is assigned to a “stronger” economic activity.

Concluding remarks of this paper are concerned with the issues of an accommodation type that would stand in concordance with both an ecodestination type and a national park, which have not been quintessential in Serbia yet. First of all, in national parks of Serbia there should be activities to create better atmosphere that will in return lead to popularization of ecotours and nature protection through tourism development (ecotourism), which would finally lead to growing interest in accommodation capacities that contribute to development of this type of tourism (ecolodges and ecohotels).



- Amidžić L., (2005): Nacionalni parkovi Srbije. Zavod za zaštitu prirode Srbije, Beograd.
- Buckley, R., (2009): Ecotourism, Principles & Practices. International Centre for Ecotourism Research, Griffith University.
- Jovičić, D., (1997): Razvoj turizma i zaštita prirode u nacionalnim parkovima, Velar-ta, Beograd.
- Damnjanović I., Đoković F., (2013): Management of national parks as a factor of tourism competitiveness, Ekološka istina, Jun, 2013.
- Damnjanović I., Đoković, F., Petronić-Petrović, L., (2016): Protected areas: Management objectives as an aspect of sustainable tourism - a regional perspective, Quaestus, Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 235 – 248.
- Stojanović, V., (2011): Turizam i održivi razvoj. Departman za geografiju, turizam i hotelijerstvo, PMF, Novi Sad.
- Walderback, K., (1995): Beneficial Environmental Sustainable Tourism, Vanuatu: BEST.