

## IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE FIELD OF PROTECTED AREAS

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### Abstract

*The protected natural areas are assets of great importance for the development of tourism. Bearing in mind the fact that tourism, in addition to positive impacts, in many ways also exerts a negative influence on the environment, especially in the field of natural resources and biodiversity, it is interesting to consider the influence of tourism on the protected natural areas and the reason why the monitoring of protected areas in Serbia is necessary. The aforesaid is particularly important as the sustainable management of the protected natural areas is an important condition of continuous development of tourist turnover. The research section of the paper deals with the number of individual protected natural assets in Serbia in the period from 2015 to 2017 and touches upon the ecologically significant areas. The paper applies an analytical method, a deductive method and the basic quantitative analysis of data. The research in this paper was based on the official data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the Environmental Protection Agency.*

**Key Words:** *tourism, environment, protected natural areas, Republic of Serbia*

**JEL Classification:** *F64, O13, Q56, Z32*

### Introduction

Tourism is an activity which in modern society has a significant impact on the economic, social, functional and manifest structural characteristics of a specific area (Todorović & Bjeljic, 2007, p. 135). It is a fact that

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tourism has gradually grown from an optional pursuit into an inescapable and extremely important need of the modern man. As a result, we could say that tourism is one of the most complex economic and social phenomena of the modern world.

The development of tourism has been stimulated by the globalisation process. Owing to globalisation and its effects, tourism has been undergoing a powerful expansion. According to Arnaut (2009), the globalisation process has resulted in tourism taking on new dimensions on a global scale. On the other hand, the consequences of the effect of globalisation in the field of tourism development are numerous, including among other things multiple effects, both positive and negative, on the environment.

In the context of emphasising the importance of tourism in the introduction, it should be noted that tourism is a branch of industry with a significant share in the world economy. As stated by Stanić and Vujić (2016), "tourism covers 30% of the global export of services, and 6% of the total export of goods and services, and as an export category, on the global scale it ranks just below oil, chemical and food industries" (p. 14). With a view to properly valorising the effect of tourism on a global scale, Bote Gomez (1993) points out that the income from tourism has played a key role in financing industrialisation in many countries. In other words, tourism has enabled the import of machines and technology which were required to stimulate the economy of many countries (Padilla, 1988).

The World Tourism Organization has established, on the basis of detailed analysis, that tourism on a broader scale, and the needs and expectations of users of tourism offers "have been focusing less and less on "tourism under the Sun", with the growing interest in unspoilt nature, and a greater preference for natural resources and the cultural heritage of the countryside, areas outside urban environments" (Muhi, 2010, p. 476). Primarily owing to the conserved nature and other aspects of a healthy environment, Serbia has significant assets and multiple options for continuous tourism development, in particular in the field of rural tourism. Namely, as stated by Cvijanović et al. (2017), the considerable potential for the development of tourism in Serbia is especially associated with rural areas (p. 872). The fact that tourism has a significant impact on the development of rural areas is also emphasised by Ćirić et al. (2014, p. 26).

In view of the aforesaid, the positive effects of tourism are multiple, not only on the local, but on the global level as well. Namely, in its primary concept tourism has included the four important aspects of sustainable development: the ecological, social, cultural and economic (Počuča et al., 2017). With regard to the ecological aspect, we can certainly identify some global trends such as the demand for ecological resources, a higher social, as well as individual ecological awareness, more successful and better organised international cooperation in the field of environment protection.

Besides the positive, there are also some highly noticeable negative effects of tourism on the environment, which are primarily manifested in the form of pollution of environment elements (the air, water, land), a reduction in the natural agricultural areas, the destruction of the flora and fauna, a degradation of culture-historical monuments, crowding, a spatial population redistribution, as well as a banalization of the area (Lazarević, 2017, p. 138-139).

Given the fact that tourism has an indisputable effect on the economic valorisation of resources, employment, the living standards in a particular area, as well as demographic and social effects, in addition to the relevant theoretical considerations, the subject of the paper also includes a quantitative analysis of the official statistical data regarding the kinds and numbers of the protected natural resources in the Serbian territory, as well as an observation of all the ecologically significant areas in Serbia. We have applied the analytical method in theoretical content analysis, the deductive method in drawing conclusions, and a basic quantitative data analysis in the part concerning research. The research has been based on the official data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the Environmental Protection Agency. The analysis of the kinds and numbers of protected natural areas in the Serbia territory has been performed for the period 2015-2017.

### **Literature review**

Tourism is primarily a planned and motivated behaviour of users of tourism services, with the expectations of the traveller playing a key role in travel decision-making. It is therefore emphasised that the needs, attitudes and motives of tourists are of crucial importance in this context (Wall & Mathison, 2006, p. 45). In analysing tourism, Jovičić (2000) states that tourism is an activity which valorises some spatial elements

which are marginal to many other industries (p. 17). Jovičić (1999) also defines tourism as a "set of relationships and phenomena related to movement and consumption outside the place of permanent residence, with the aim of satisfying recreational and cultural needs" (p. 17). Similarly, Vidučić (2007) states that tourism is a set of relationships and phenomena which result from travels and stays of visitors in a particular place, if these stays are not intended to set up permanent residence and if they are not associated with any commercial activity on their part.

Looking at tourism from an individual standpoint, Tomka (2012) indicates that "tourism is no longer travel for this and that, but a whole series of phenomena, relationships, effects which result from a meeting of receptive spaces, phenomena and processes in them, as well as the life of the local population and temporary visitors – tourists, under the influence of a large number of different needs, motives and expectations, with the aim of acquiring new experiences" (p. 16). In defining tourism, some theorists quote its multiple positive effects in different areas. As stated in the introduction, tourism has an unquestionable effect on the overall economic development of society. Tourism plays a key role in local economic development (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014; Karampela et al., 2016, p. 161). Primarily, tourism can be treated as an industry branch which promotes both economic growth and equality, including the application of local inputs – the local resources, as well as the engagement of the local manpower (Mansury & Hara, 2007, p. 213). In less developed regions, local communities can derive significant economic-social benefits from tourism (Zhenhua, 2003, pp. 465-466).

It follows from the aforesaid that tourism is not only recognised as an effect of economic development, but also as an economic development factor (Stanić & Vujić, 2016, p. 14). As such, tourism has a considerable impact on the economic, social, cultural and natural environment. Due to this effect in particular, it has a duty to establish sustainable and responsible development, with the ultimate goal of preserving the vital values of an area. In this context in particular, we arrive at the concepts of sustainable development of tourism and ecotourism as a specific form of alternative tourism, as, according to Milićević et al. (2013), "contemporary tourism implies that each of the activities within this complex system must be aimed at safeguarding one's own interests through a controlled use of natural resources" (p. 24).

According to Stefanović and Azemović (2012), "the sustainable development concept implies a balanced economic, social and cultural development without threats to the environment, whereby future generations would be enabled to develop at the same, or a higher level" (p. 43). In this regard Beljanski (2018) indicates that the main goal of sustainable tourism is to enable the tourists to "enjoy and acquire knowledge on the natural, historical and cultural characteristics of the environment, along with preserving the integrity of the place and promoting the economic development and welfare of the local community" (p. 38). Sustainable tourism development includes as a significant part the development of a new tourism form – ecotourism, intended to protect and conserve plant and animal species (Beljanski, 2018, p. 38).

Ecotourism is one of special forms of alternative tourism, and it can be defined as a form of tourism primarily inspired by the natural history of a region, including the hosts' culture (Ziffer, 1989). Honey (2008) points out that ecotourism is "travel into sensitive, ancient and usually protected areas, which aims to affect the areas as little as possible, and which is usually smaller in scope" (p. 33). This helps in educating the visitors, provides safety measures, directly contributes to the economic development and political empowerment of the local communities, and fosters appreciation of different cultures and human rights. Unlike classic tourism destinations, Jegdić (2010) points out that "ecodestinations are most often protected natural resources or areas with preserved natural characteristics and a rich biodiversity, but may also include relatively altered rural, and some urban areas as well" (p. 65). On the other hand, Ćurić (2010) states that ecotourism, as opposed to other tourism types, "directly contributes to conservation of nature" (p. 98).

Finally, we could say that ecotourism is "environmentally responsible travelling and the visiting of relatively unspoilt natural areas, in order to enjoy nature and to appreciate it, which promotes conservation, exerts low visitor influence and enables beneficial active socio-economic involvement of the local population" (Beljanski, 2018, p. 38).

Bearing in mind that besides the positive, tourism also reflects a number of negative effects on the environment, in particular in the field of natural resources and biodiversity, it would be interesting to examine the influence of tourism on protected natural areas, and analyse the need for monitoring of protected areas in Serbia. The aforesaid is of particular

importance as sustainable management of protected natural areas is a significant factor of continuous development of tourism turnover.

### **Methodology and data sources used**

The subject of analysis is the representation of individual protected natural areas in Serbia, in the period 2015-2017. Besides the aforesaid investigation, we have focused on ecologically important areas in the Republic of Serbia in 2017. Parallel to the analysis of the representation of individual protected natural areas in Serbia for each particular year, we will examine the total areas of protected natural resources for each year, and the effect of the total tourism turnover for the observed period on the protection and conservation of the environment and protected natural areas, with conclusions on the need for introducing protected area monitoring in the tourist activity segment.

In this research, we have applied the analytical method in theoretical analysis of the content, the deductive method in drawing conclusions, and a basic quantitative data analysis in the segment involving research. The research is based on the official data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Research results and discussion**

Article 3 of the Environmental Protection Law ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 135/2004,... 95/2018 – other law) defines some key concepts relevant to the subject of research of this paper. Thus, the living environment is a set of natural and manmade values the complex interrelations of which make up the environment, i.e. the space and conditions for living, while a protected natural resource is a conserved part of nature, characterised by distinctive values and properties (geodiversity, biodiversity, areas, landscapes, etc.), of lasting ecological, scientific, cultural, educational, health-recreational, tourism and other kinds of significance, owing to which it has special protection as a resource of general interest.

The following tables present the quantitative indicators of the representation of protected areas and protected species as the basic elements of protected natural resources, for the period 2015-2017, followed by the percentage shares of protected areas and protected species in the total number of protected natural areas, for the same period,

as well as an overview of the ecologically significant areas of the Republic of Serbia in 2017.

Table 1: *The quantitative indicators of the representation of protected natural resources, for the period 2015-2017*

<i>Protected natural sites</i>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<i>Protected areas</i>	467	464	463
National parks	5	5	5
Natural parks	17	16	18
Landscapes	20	20	20
Reserves	69	70	68
Natural monuments	313	311	310
Culture-historical areas	38	38	38
Protected habitats	3	4	4
<i>Protected species</i>	2613	2613	2613
Strictly protected wild species	1760	1783	1783
Protected wild species	853	860	860

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2018, p. 259; Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2017, p. 293; Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2016, p. 273.*

Table 2: *The percentage shares of the protected areas and the protected species in the total number of protected natural resources, for the period 2015-2017*

<i>Protected natural sites</i>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<i>Protected areas</i>	467	464	463
National parks	1.07 %	1.08%	1.08%
Natural parks	3.64 %	3.45%	3.89%
Landscapes	4.28 %	4.31%	4.32%
Reserves	14.78 %	15.09%	14.69%
Natural monuments	67.02 %	67.03%	66.95%
Culture-historical areas	8.14 %	8.19%	8.21%
Protected habitats	0.64 %	0.86%	0.86%
<i>Protected species</i>	2613	2613	2613
Strictly protected wild species	67.36 %	68.24%	68.24%
Protected wild species	32.64 %	32.91%	32.91%

Source: *The authors' calculation*

We can conclude from the data shown in tables 1 and 2 that the most frequent in the group of protected areas are natural monuments, with the percentage shares of 67.02 % in 2015, 67.03 % in 2016, and 66.95 % in 2017 respectively, compared to the total number of protected areas in the Republic of Serbia. In addition, we can see that the least represented in

the group of protected areas are protected habitats (0.64 % in 2015, 0.86 % in 2016, and 0.86 % in 2017).

The representation of other protected areas, by years, expressed in percentages is as follows: National parks (1.07 % in 2015, 1.08 % in 2016 and 1.08 % in 2017), Natural parks (3.64 % in 2015, 3.45 % in 2016 and 3.89 % in 2017), Landscapes (4.28 % in 2015, 4.31 % in 2016 and 3.32 % in 2017), Reserves (14.78 % in 2015, 15.09 % in 2016, and 14.69 % in 2017) and Culture-Historical Areas (8.14 % in 2015, 8.19 % in 2016, and 8.21 % in 2017).

The representation of the other protected areas, by years, has the following percentage values: National Parks (1.07 % in 2015, 1.08 % in 2016, and 1.08 % in 2017), Natural Parks (3.64 % in 2015, 3.45 % in 2016, and 3.89 % in 2017), Landscapes (4.28 % in 2015, 4.31 % in 2016, and 3.32 % in 2017), Reserves (14.78 % in 2015, 15.09 % in 2016 and 14.69 % in 2017) and Culture-Historical Areas (8.14 % in 2015, 8.19 % in 2016, and 8.21 % in 2017).

Strictly Protected Wild Species are better represented in the protected species group (67.36 % in 2015 and 68.24 % in 2016 and 2017), compared to Protected Wild Species (32.64 % in 2015 and 32.91 % in 2016 and 2017).

Table 3: *Review of Important Sites for Ecological Network in the Republic of Serbia, for 2017*

National name					
1	Subotica lake and sand bank	35	Brdjanska klisura, canyon	69	Ozren-Jadovnik
2	Velike droplje pastures	36	Gruža reservoir	70	Pešter
3	Gornje Podunavlje	37	Ovčarsko-kablarska klisura, canyon	71	Gutavica
4	Salt marshes of the Western Bačka	38	Brzansko Moravište	72	Golija
5	Salt marsh areas around Doroslovo	39	Klisura Osaničke reke, canyon	73	Ras-Sopoćani
6	Krivaja river loess valleys	40	Mustafa	74	Rogozna
7	Bečej fish farm	41	Felješana	75	Kopaonik
8	Slano kopovo	42	Mali Krš	76	Čelije
9	Okanj and Rusanda	43	Stol-Veliki Krš	77	Prokop
10	Jegrička	44	Deli Jovan	78	Lalinac salt marsh

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11	Titel hill	45	Bukovo	79	Kamenički vis
12	Carska bara	46	Kučajске mountains	80	Stara mountain
13	Karadjordjevo	47	Rtanj	81	Sićevačka klisura, canyon
14	Fruška gora and koviljski cape	48	Mala Jasenova glava	82	Suva mountain
15	Potamišje	49	Gornje Pomoravlje	83	Šljivovički vis
16	Vršac mountains and meadows	50	Ozren and Devica	84	Krupacko blato
17	Bosuts forests	51	Mojsinjske mountains and Stalačka klisura, canyon	85	Jerma
18	Zasavica	52	Osredak	86	Zeleničje
19	Obedska bara (pond)	53	Kalenić	87	Kukavica
20	Deliblatska peščara	54	Vrh Željina-Pločka čuka	88	Vlasina
21	Donje Podrinje	55	Goč	89	Radan
22	Confluence of the Sava river into the Danube	56	Klisura Ibra	90	Aleksandrovac salt marsh
23	Košutnjak	57	Iznad Tatalije	91	Rujam
24	Avala	58	Tesne Jaruge	92	Pčinja
25	Kosmaj	59	Zelenika	93	Jarešnik
26	Šalinački lug	60	Klisura Đetinje, canyon	94	Rudina
27	Prugovo	61	Tara	95	Golemi vrh
28	Đerdap	62	Zlatibor	96	Grmija
29	Mala Vrbica	63	Park forest near Ribnica	97	Gazimestan
30	Kladovo-Radujevac	64	Mali Rzav river valley	98	Sitnica
31	Cer	65	Mučanj	99	Miruša
32	Danilova kosa	66	Uvac and Mileševka	100	Prokletije
33	Valjevske mountains	67	Paljevine	101	Šar planina
34	Veliki Šturac	68	Kamena gora	/	/

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Serbia, 2018, p. 261.*

We can conclude from the data in Table 3 that 101 ecologically significant areas in total were recorded in the Republic of Serbia in 2017, in line with the Ecological Network Regulation of the Republic of Serbia Government ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 102/10).

The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2017 of the Environmental Protection Agency states that during 2017 the area of the protected sites was increased by 84,000 ha, i.e. by 14.5% compared to 2016. In addition, 7.48% of the Republic of

Serbia territory is protected, amounting in total to 662,435 ha (The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2017, 2018, p. 68).

It is also stated in the aforesaid report that 459 protected areas and resources are under government protection. During 2017 3 natural parks and one natural monument were put under protection (the "Bačkotopolske Doline Natural Park", covering an area of 522.5 ha, the "Radan Natural Park", covering an area of 41,312.7 ha, the "Zlatibor Natural Park" covering an area of 41,923.3 ha, and the Natural Monument "Two Yew Trees on the Grange near Novo Orahovo" (The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2017, 2018, p. 68).

The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2016 of the Environmental Protection Agency states that during 2016 the area of the protected natural resources amounted to 578,705 ha, which equals 6.54% of the Republic of Serbia territory. 463 protected areas and resources in 2016 were under government protection. During 2016 the natural monuments "The Park of the Sremska Kamenica Institute" and the "Copper Beach Tree in Omoljica" were protected, covering in total an area of about 35.8 ha, as well as the "Big Mud" habitat, covering an area of 273.7 ha (The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2016, 2017, p. 63).

The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2015 of the Environmental Protection Agency states that during 2015 the total area of protected natural resources amounted to 578,500 ha, which is approximately 6.5% of the Republic of Serbia territory. During 2015 special nature reserves, "Peštersko Polje" and "Suva Mountain" were protected, as well as the strict nature reserves, "Iznad Tatalije", "Zelenika", "Tesne jaruge", covering in total 31,239 ha, the landscapes of special characteristics "Karaš Nera" and "Tatkova zemunica", covering an area of 1,903 ha, the natural monuments "Stabla Čačka", "Topčiderski park", "Šumati šumar", "Lalinačka slatina", "Three Black Pine Trees-Dobroselica", "Byford's Forest", "The Wild Chestnut in Sremski Karlovci" of the total area of around 70 ha, as well as the "Tikvara" natural park of the area of 555 ha (The Report on the Condition of the Living Environment in the Republic of Serbia for 2015, 2016, p. 53).

Besides the data presented above, it is interesting to explore the impact of the total tourism turnover of the observed period (2015-2017) on the protection and conservation of the living environment and on protected natural areas.

Bearing in mind that one of the principal objectives of the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2025 ("The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 98/2016) is sustainable ecological development, environment protection and conservation is a very important segment of sustainable tourism development, so that special attention is devoted to maintaining the quality of the living environment. According to the Indicator Overview of the Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2017, it is stated that in 2017 "there were 3.08 million arrivals in total, and 8.33 million tourist overnight stays, which constitutes a total tourism turnover rise of around 11% compared to the previous year. The monthly analysis of arrivals and overnight stays indicates that the highest turnover is in the summer months, which means that the highest pressure on biodiversity and water resources is exerted in this period. Given that the negative effects of tourism are reflected, primarily, on biodiversity and protected natural areas, protected area monitoring is introduced in the tourist activity segment" (The Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2017 – Indicator overview, 2018, p. 37).

According to the Indicator overview of the Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2016, it is stated that in 2016 "there were 2.75 million arrivals in total, and 7.54 million tourist overnight stays, which constitutes a total tourism turnover rise of around 13% compared to the previous year" (The Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2016 – Indicator overview, 2018, p. 38). Considering the impact of tourism on biodiversity and protected natural areas, we can draw the same conclusion on the need for introducing monitoring of the protected areas in the tourist activity segment.

According to the Indicator overview of the Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2015, it is stated that in 2015 "there were 2.44 million arrivals in total, which constitutes a tourism turnover rise of around 11.2% compared to the previous year". 6.65 million overnight stays were recorded, i.e. 9.3%

more compared to 2014” (The Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2015 – The Indicator overview, 2017, p.28). It is also stated in the Indicator overview that the potential negative effects of tourism on the environment "are expressed through pressure on natural resources, waste generation, as well as pollutant emissions". On the other hand, tourism has a priority interest in maintaining the environment quality at a high level, as environment hazards can consequently threaten the future development of this business activity", which leads to the same conclusion on the need for the existence of monitoring of the protected areas in the tourist activity segment.

### **Conclusion**

Tourism is an activity which has a significant impact on numerous social aspects, both in terms of positive and negative effects. The effect of tourism on the environment is particularly worth considering, especially in the last few decades when tourism has seen prosperity on a global level. The positive influence of tourism in general is reflected in the scope of the four important aspects of sustainable development: environmental, social, cultural and economic. However, if we take a look at the relationship of tourism with the environment, besides the positive, we may notice multiple negative effects of tourism, which are primarily manifested in the form of pollution of environment elements, the destruction of the flora and fauna, the degradation of culture-historical monuments, a banalization of the area, etc.

Ecotourism is a specific form of tourism, which represents environmentally responsible travel, with the aim of simultaneously visiting and maintaining ecologically significant areas. Observing the relationship between ecotourism and protected natural resources, we may perceive a conspicuous interconnectedness. In view of the fact that besides the positive, tourism also reflects a number of negative effects on the environment, in particular with regard to natural resources and biodiversity, it has been interesting to examine the effect of tourism on protected natural areas, and why there is a need for monitoring protected areas in Serbia.

As individual authors point out, protected natural resources are very attractive to tourists, with two clearly defined purposes: the protection of significant natural values and recreation.

The subject of analysis of this paper has been the representation of individual protected natural resources in Serbia, in the period 2015-2017. In addition, we have taken a look at the ecologically significant areas of the Republic of Serbia in 2017. Parallel to the analysis of representation of individual protected natural resources in Serbia for each year, we have reviewed the total areas of protected natural resources, and the impact of the total tourism turnover of the observed period on the protection and conservation of the environment and protected natural areas, drawing conclusions on the need for introducing the monitoring of protected areas in the tourist activity segment.

In summing up the relevant data presented in the tables, we can conclude that the best represented in the group of protected areas are natural monuments, while protected habitats have the lowest representation. We can also conclude that 101 ecologically significant areas were recorded in the Republic of Serbia in 2017.

The conclusion which certainly stands out in the Indicator overview of the Economic Potential and Activities of Importance to the Republic of Serbia Environment for 2016 and 2017 is that, bearing in mind that the negative effects of tourism are reflected, first of all, in biodiversity and protected natural areas, it is essential to introduce the monitoring of protected areas in the tourism activity segment.

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