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THE IMPORTANCE OF WASTE MANAGEMENT AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR OF TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Milan Počuča¹; Jelena Matijašević²

Abstract

The preservation and protection of the environment is an imperative in modern society. Unsystematic and inadequate handling of waste is one of the major problems of environmental policy in Serbia. This situation is primarily the consequence of the society's inadequately developed attitude towards waste, and its failure to understand the positive effects of waste management. According to research, developing countries are, quite realistically, facing certain problems and challenges in this area. In the context of the subject of this paper, it is essential to point out that waste management belongs in the category of important environmental factors of tourism destination development. According to the Republic of Serbia visions of tourism to 2025, tourism is to become the leading promoter of the Republic of Serbia's image in the world as a modern and desirable destination for visits, vacations and business alike, thus fulfilling the constant innovative function in the implementation of the modern standards, new technologies and protection of nature. The research part of the paper will be concerned with the opinion and perception of the professional public as regards the scope and practical applicability of the existing legal solutions and programmatic and planning documents in the waste management area.

Key Words: *tourism, tourism destination, waste management, environmental development factors, Republic of Serbia*

JEL classification: *K32, P28, Q53, Q57, R11, Z32*

¹ Milan Počuča, PhD, Full professor, Faculty of Law for Commerce and Judiciary in Novi Sad, Geri Karolja Street no. 1, Novi Sad 21000, The Republic of Serbia, +38163224740, pocucabmilan@gmail.com

² Jelena Matijašević, PhD, Full professor, Faculty of Law for Commerce and Judiciary in Novi Sad, Geri Karolja Street no. 1, Novi Sad 21000, The Republic of Serbia, +381616538747, jelena@pravni-fakultet.info

Introduction

The environment represents “everything man’s living and production activity is directly or indirectly related to” (Hamidović, 2012, p. 235).

Environmental pollution sources have changed and evolved, so that contemporary society is characterized by a predominantly manipulative attitude towards radioactive substances and other hazardous substances with highly contaminating properties. The pollution sources can be primarily classified into natural and artificial.

The natural sources, according to Đorđević (2018) are “all the processes taking place in the biosphere beyond man’s control (volcanoes, earthquakes, etc.), while the artificial are the products of all human activities (the extraction and processing of mineral raw materials, thermal and nuclear powerplants, agriculture, industry, transportation, tourism, inadequate waste management, etc.)” (p. 466). In this context Keković and Todorović (2008) state that “the indicators of endangerment of the environment lend weight to the claim that the social endangerment factors prevail over the natural, and that understanding the endangerment factors is the basis for organizing the system of its protection and improvement” (p. 24).

The environment, which is an asset protected by the Constitution and every individual’s right, is, in essence, one of the pillars of sustainable development, and with this in mind it should be noted that “environmental principles belong among the basic principles which provide a foundation for sustainable development in general, and in particular the sustainable development of rural parts of a certain territory, and which primarily imply observance of the destination’s natural diversity” (Cvijanović et al., 2017, p. 871).

It is certain that waste management has a significant impact on the condition of the environment. An optimal and adequate waste management may greatly contribute to environmental preservation and protection. On the other hand, inadequate waste management represents one of the greatest problems that environmental protection faces up against, and is exclusively the result of a society’s inappropriate attitude towards waste. The attitude of a society with regard to waste has become very important in the growing industrialization period. Namely, expansive growth of the total quantity of all kinds of waste did not correlate to the environmental protection policy, in the Republic of Serbia territory in particular. According to the view

which has stood out in this context in contemporary theory, “unsystematic and inadequate handling of waste is one of the major problems in environmental policy in Serbia. This situation is primarily the consequence of a society’s undefined attitude towards waste, and failure to understand why waste management is important and unawareness of the positive effects of this process” (Group of authors, 2011, p. 2).

In view of the fact that the level of waste management is one of the greatest environmental challenges, and that problems and challenges are most often found in developing countries, further on in the paper we will analyse the effect of waste on the environment, as well as the characteristic problems and challenges that developing countries are facing with regard to adequate waste management and treatment. In addition, according to the Republic of Serbia visions of tourism to 2025, tourism is to become the leading promoter of the Republic of Serbia’s global image as a modern and desirable destination for visits, vacations and business alike, thus fulfilling the constantly innovating function in the implementation of the modern standards, new technologies and protection of nature. In this light, the research part of the paper will be concerned with the opinion and perception of the professional public as regards the scope and practical applicability of the existing legal solutions and programmatic and planning documents in the waste management area.

Consideration of waste as an environmental factor of tourism destinations development and its effect on the environment

According to Počuča and Matijašević Obradović (2019), “tourism is one of the most complex economic and sociological phenomena of the modern world” (p. 554). In its primary concept, tourism “incorporated the four important aspects of sustainable development: environmental, social, cultural and economic” (Počuča et al., 2017).

It should be noted that an element “of great significance to tourism development is certainly the tourism destination” (Petrović et al., 2016, p. 62), the popularization of which is influenced by many factors. One of the certainly decisive factors is “the attitude and opinion of tourists on the quality of the tourism destination offer. With regard to that, tourism turnover is an important indicator of the number of visits to a tourism destination” (Počuča & Matijašević Obradović, 2020, p. 336). One of the environmental factors of development and popularization of tourism destinations is certainly the particular destinations’ appropriate treatment

of waste in the relevant areas. This position is basically incorporated in the Republic of Serbia's vision of tourism to 2025, which is an integral part of the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025 (2016), in which it is stated that "in 2025 the Republic of Serbia will become a globally recognized tourism destination, as a result of the established system of development and sustainable management of resources, and a coordination of activities of all the entities of importance to tourism development", as well as that "tourism will become a leading promoter of the Republic of Serbia's global image as a modern and desirable destination for visits, vacations and business alike, thus fulfilling the constantly innovating function in the implementation of the modern standards, new technologies and protection of nature".

According to provisions of article 5 of the Law on Waste Management (2009), waste includes "any matter or object which the holder discards, intends to, or is required to discard", while waste treatment means "the operation of reuse or disposal, including previous preparation for reuse or disposal", and waste management "is the implementation of the stipulated measures for the handling of waste in the process of collection, transportation, storage, treatment, and reuse and disposal of waste, including control of these activities and looking after the waste management facilities after closing and the activities undertaken by the seller and agent".

According to article 5 of the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste (2009), waste contamination prevention implies "reduction of hazardous matter content in materials and substances at the level of the production process, market placement, distribution, use, and in the phase of removal, in particular through the improvement of products and modern technology development", while packaging waste reuse includes "any operation by which the packaging, which is planned and designed in such a way as to fulfil a minimum number of emptyings and fillings during its use (multiple uses), is refilled or used for the same purpose for which it was designed, with or without the auxiliary means present in the market, which enable the refilling of the packaging. Reused packaging becomes waste if not used for a longer period of time".

As Young (2012) points out: "one of the greatest environmental challenges in Serbia is a low level of waste management. High expenses, irrational organization, a low quality of services and insufficient care for the environment are the result of the crushing situation in the organization of waste management" (p. 169). Numerous authors agree with this statement.

In this context Bukumirić et al. (2017) say that “the effect of waste on the environment is negative in many ways, and the key reasons for that in the Republic of Serbia are: insufficient and unequal coverage of municipalities by public utility services, the disorderliness and overloading of landfills, and the citizens’ low awareness of the ways of proper handling of waste and preservation of the environment in general” (p. 87).

On the other hand, analysing the aspects of waste exploitation improvement, Josimović et al. (2009) state that acceptable and sustainable waste management requires an integrated system of collection, recycling, reuse, and disposal of waste in line with the waste management hierarchy.

What is certainly positive in this area is the fact that the society in Serbia is increasingly becoming aware of the importance of planned and systematically organized waste management, in particular of the kinds of waste which can cause long-term negative consequences both in the country, and the wider area as well.

The characteristic challenges faced by developing countries in the field of waste management and the situation in Serbia

Waste management is a priority issue which encompasses many aspects of social and economic development, and is as such mainly associated with the scope of global challenges, including public health, climate changes, population decline, food provision, efficiency of resources and sustainable production and consumption (Premakumara et al., 2017).

Most problems and challenges are faced by developing countries. According to GWMO research, “in most developing countries, the application of advanced waste treatment technologies is still hardly attainable, and disposal is practically the only form of utility waste treatment. The coverage by organized collection of utility waste in developing countries is from 36% to 64%” (GWMO, 2015).

Further on, “one of the main problems in developing countries is the lack of the political will to implement the developed strategy and the supporting legislation, a shortage of funds, the expensive process of collecting solid waste due to the great dispersion of populated areas and a small quantity of waste per capita” (Tot et al., 2016, p. 740).

Legislative development in the waste management domain in the Republic of Serbia has only become evident in recent years. Parallel to the adoption and implementation of strategic and legal provisions, the waste management subject-matter has been gradually drawing public attention.

Analysing the situation in Serbia with regard to waste management and treatment, Tot (2020) points out that “the system of waste management in the Republic of Serbia is currently at a level similar to that at which the now developed European countries, such as the Netherlands, Germany or Austria, were during the 1970’s. The situation in the waste management sector in the Republic of Serbia is unfavourable as a result of maladaptive solutions within the adopted planning documents, which very often do not reflect the real situation, nor represent long-term solutions. This situation is the result of non-existence of the required data, non-compliance with legal regulations, inadequate decision-making and insufficient knowledge, which are required for proper planning of the waste management system” (p. 28).

The same author also says that “citizens do not feel and see the waste management problem as their own, but as someone else’s problem, resolving which is always the responsibility of someone else – the state, local self-government, industry, or neighbours. The public interest in citizens’ more direct participation in the design and implementation of an environmental policy in the Republic of Serbia is in decline, which coincides with a general apathy relating to active and direct participation in politics in general. The public awareness is not sufficiently developed and citizens, as a result, view waste as a public commodity not to be taken care of, but only exploited” (Tot, 2020, p. 28).

Methodology and data sources used

With a view to understanding more clearly the public opinion on the scope and practical applicability of the existing legal solutions and programmatic and planning documents in the field of waste management, a study was carried out by means of a survey. The study included doctoral students and doctors of laws. Bearing in mind that certain questions, asked in the survey, were highly technical and related to the environmental protection subject taught at doctoral academic studies, as well as to various project activities within the subject matter which doctors of laws carry out in their work, surveying the general public would not have fulfilled the purpose of the study, nor provided a relevant public opinion. Thus, the aim of this study was to obtain the opinions and perception of the professional public with regard

to the scope and practical applicability of the existing legal solutions, and programmatic and planning documents in the field of waste management. Also, there is no doubt that waste management is a significant environmental factor. However, the key question for this paper is - how important is waste management for the development of tourist destinations. The answer will be defined in the next subtitle which deals with the analysis of research results.

The study was carried out by using two methods, i.e. directly through the printed form of the survey, where the subjects answered the questions by circling only one of several answers offered, and by completing an electronic questionnaire which in terms of content corresponded to the printed version of the survey, which the subject could access via the link sent to them. Insisting on giving only one answer to each question was aimed at more clearly defining the attitude of the scientific and professional public in the field covered by the study. The analytical method was also applied in theoretical content analysis, the deductive method in the drawing of conclusions, and the basic descriptive statistical data analysis in the part devoted to research.

Research results and discussion

In view of the fact that the Law on Environmental Protection (2004), the Law on Waste Management (2009) and the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste (2009) have been amended several times, and that the Waste Management Strategy for the period 2010–2019 (2010) remained in force for a long time, it is important to analyse the public opinion by means of the survey in this study, as regards the scope and practical applicability of the existing legal solutions and programmatic and planning documents in the field of waste management. The survey was carried out anonymously in Novi Sad, in the period from December 2020 to January 2021, and the research included 20 subjects, 7 of whom were students of doctoral academic studies of law, while 13 subjects were in the category of doctors of laws.

The survey consisted of three multiple-choice questions, which were as follows: 1.) Are you familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management? 2.) Which law do you first consult when it comes to the field of waste management? 3.) How often do you, in your business activities, consult the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management?

The following table presents all the obtained results, i.e. the structure of the subjects who gave a particular answer to a question, the result analysis parameters, as well as the numeric and percentual result values, with a separate summary of the results obtained from students of doctoral academic studies of laws, as well as doctors of laws, and the aggregate results based on the answers obtained from all the subjects included in the study.

Table 1: *The public opinion on the scope and practical applicability of the current legal solutions and programmatic and planning documents in the field of waste management*

Question	Answer	Doctors of laws		Students of doctoral studies of laws		Total	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Question no. 1.)	Yes	3	23.1	/	/	3	15
	No	5	38.5	1	14.3	6	30
	Partially	5	38.5	6	85.7	11	55
Question no. 2.)	Law on Waste Management	3	23.1	2	28.5	5	25
	Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Law on Environmental Protection	7	53.8	4	57.2	11	55
	I don't consult any law	3	23.1	1	14.3	4	20
Question no. 3.)	I consult it fully	1	7.7	1	14.3	2	10
	I consult it partially	4	30.8	3	42.9	7	35
	I don't consult it, but I am aware of the existence of that document	4	30.8	2	28.5	6	30
	I am not aware of the existence of that document	4	30.8	1	14.3	5	25

Source: *The authors' original research*

The discussion of the survey results in the order of the questions asked follows below.

Survey question no. 1: Are you familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management? The subjects were offered the following answers to this question: Yes; No; Partially.

As regards the opinion of students of doctoral academic studies of laws, the research showed that 6 subjects, i.e. 85.7%, answered they were partially familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management, and that 1 subject, i.e. 14.3%, gave the answer they were not familiar with the existing legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management, while no subject was fully familiar with the existing legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management.

As regards the opinion of the category of doctors of laws, the research showed that 3 subjects, i.e. 23.1%, were fully familiar with the existing legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management, that 5 subjects, i.e. 38.5%, were not at all familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management, whereas 5 subjects, i.e. 38.5%, were partially familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management.

The total results based on answers to this survey question indicate that 3 subjects out of the total number, i.e. 15%, are fully familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management, then that 6 subjects out of the total number, i.e. 30%, are not at all familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management, while 11 subjects out of the total number, i.e. 55%, are partially familiar with the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management. The obtained results point to the fact that the current legal regulations in the Republic of Serbia in the field of waste management are consulted mainly partially in terms of science, in line with the frequency of scientific research based on this topic. A third of the number of subjects are actually not at all familiar with the existence and contents of the regulations governing this area.

Survey question no. 2: Which law do you first consult when it comes to the field of waste management? The subjects were offered the following

answers to this question: the Law on Waste Management, the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste, the Law on Environmental Protection, and I don't consult any law.

As regards the opinion of students of doctoral academic studies of laws, the research showed that 2 subjects, i.e. 28.5%, answered they first consulted the Law on Waste Management, when it came to the field of waste management, then that no subject consulted the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste when it came to the field of waste management, that 4 subjects, or 57.2%, consulted the Law on Environmental Protection when it came to the field of waste management, while 1 subject, i.e. 14.3%, did not consult any law when it came to the field of waste management.

As regards the opinion of the category of doctors of laws, the research showed that 3 subjects, i.e. 23.1%, answered they first consulted the Law on Waste Management, when it came to the field of waste management, then that no subject consulted the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste when it came to the field of waste management, that 7 subjects, or 53.8%, consulted the Law on Environmental Protection when it came to the field of waste management, while 3 subjects, i.e. 23.1%, did not consult any law when it came to the field of waste management.

The total results based on answers to this survey question indicate that 5 subjects, i.e. 25%, answered they first consulted the Law on Waste Management when it came to the field of waste management, then that no subject consulted the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste when it came to the field of waste management, that 11 subjects, or 55%, consulted the Law on Environmental Protection when it came to the field of waste management, while 4 subjects, i.e. 20%, did not consult any law when it came to the field of waste management.

The obtained results point to the fact that in scientific terms and for scientific purposes, the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste is not at all consulted in the field of waste management, even though the packaging waste issue is one of the burning questions in this area. Further on, we can see that only one fourth of the total number of subjects consult the Law on Waste Management, which should certainly be improved in future research, bearing in mind that this law is the key legislative document in the waste management domain, regardless of the kind and type of waste, or the circumstances of its origin. Further on, the highest percentage of the subjects (55%) only consult the Law on Environmental Protection when it

comes to the field of waste management. This points to the fact that consulting *lex specialis* legal texts in the part relating to waste management should however be primary. As regards the subject of waste management, the Law on Environmental Protection is on the other hand perceived as a *lex generalis* legal text. It is surprising that one fifth of the subjects do not consult any law when it comes to the field of waste management, in any domain (part) of their scientific and/or professional engagement, which in the modern living conditions, with particular focus, among other things, on all the environmental protection aspects, is almost unacceptable.

Survey question no. 3: How often do you, in your business activities, consult the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management? The subjects were offered the following answers to this question: I consult it fully; I consult it partially; I don't consult it, but I am aware of the existence of that document; I am not aware of the existence of that document.

As regards the opinion of students of doctoral academic studies of laws, the research showed that 1 subject, i.e. 14.3%, answered they fully consulted the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, then that 3 subjects, i.e. 42.9%, answered they partially consulted the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, then that 2 subjects, i.e. 28.5%, answered they did not consult, but were aware of the existence of the aforesaid document, while 1 subject, i.e. 14.3%, answered that they were not aware of the existence of that document.

As regards the opinion of the category of doctors of laws, the research showed that 1 subject, i.e. 7.7%, answered they fully consulted the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, then that 4 subjects, i.e. 30.8%, answered they partially consulted the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, then that 4 subjects, i.e. 30.8%, answered they did not consult, but were aware of the existence of the aforesaid document, while 4 subjects, i.e. 30.8%, answered that they were not aware of the existence of that document.

The total results based on answers to this survey question indicate that 2 subjects, i.e. 10%, answered they fully consulted the Environmental

Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, then that 7 subjects, i.e. 35%, answered they partially consulted the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, then that 6 subjects, i.e. 30%, answered they did not consult the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, but were aware of the existence of that document, while 5 subjects, i.e. 25%, answered that they were not aware that the document existed at all.

The obtained results point to the fact that in scientific terms and for scientific purposes, in the waste management domain, 11 out of 20 subjects (that is, over half the subjects) never consult the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management, despite it being the key document in the environmental protection domain at the level of the City of Novi Sad. Comparing the parameters in the categories “I fully consult the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management” and “I partially consult the Environmental Protection Program of the City of Novi Sad for the period 2015-2024 in the field of waste management”, we can see that only 2 subjects, of the 20 surveyed in total, fully consult the aforesaid document for the purpose of scientific research and the relevant issues.

After the above, it is worth reviewing the question of how important waste management is for the development of tourist destinations, and why this topic was chosen as important in the field of future tourism development in Serbia. Analysis of the current state of vital components of the environment (which certainly includes waste management), can be described as a crucial factor in the development of sustainable (especially rural) tourism in selected regions. On the other hand, identifying challenges and opportunities for managing sustainable (rural) tourism contributes to a better understanding of the state of the environment. What is crucial in this area is the fact that waste management belongs to the category of vital components of additional structures to support the current and future development of tourism, not only in Serbia but also in the world. Therefore, this topic is very important and deserves a more detailed theoretical elaboration, as well as the practical implementation of the knowledge gained through research.

Conclusion

Inadequate handling of waste is one of the major problems with regard to environmental protection in the Republic of Serbia, and is exclusively the consequence of the society's inadequately developed attitude towards waste. One of the environmental factors of development and popularization of tourism destinations is certainly the particular destinations' appropriate treatment of waste in the relevant areas. This attitude is essentially reflected in the vision of tourism of the Republic of Serbia, which is an integral part of the current Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, according to which tourism is to become the leading promoter of the Republic of Serbia's global image as a modern and desirable destination for visits, vacations and business alike, thus fulfilling the constantly innovating function in the implementation of the modern standards, new technologies and protection of nature.

After the conducted survey on the public opinion on the scope and practical applicability of the existing legal solutions and programmatic and planning documents in the field of waste management, the conclusions arrived at are the following. The answers to all the three survey questions point to the need for more thorough education of the scientific community in this area, in view of the fact that the topic of waste management has become quite relevant in recent years, and that it is now being investigated much more than before. At the same time, surveying the opinions of the professional legal public on this issue is important, bearing in mind that it is almost impossible to obtain any accurate data on the knowledge of legal regulations and other relevant issues in the waste management area, owing to the specific and complex nature of this subject matter, which is insufficiently explored in the field of law during regular studies, and which can be linked to only part of project activities (primarily for the City of Novi Sad area).

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