

THE IMPORTANCE OF ECOTOURISM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM DESTINATION – A CASE STUDY OF THE SPECIAL NATURE RESERVE “MEADOWS OF GREAT BUSTARD“, VOJVODINA

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Abstract: *Tourism in protected natural areas (PNAs) has an important and very positive role in the tourism development of many countries. Whether the area of the Special Nature Reserve “Meadows of Great Bustard” (SNR) represents a significant potential for the development of tourism will be concluded in this paper by using two scientific methods. The obtained results from a conducted written questionnaire, as the first method, will be examined by a comparative analysis with related or the same results from the world practice research – the second method. This is the main task in this research. The obtained results can examine the main hypothesis that the SNR is a significant tourism potential for ecotourism both at the level of the Republic of Serbia and at the level of the countries in the region, such as Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as other European countries. The main objective of this paper is to test the main hypothesis and to obtain certain results if this protected area may have an impact on the development of sustainable tourism. By enhancing sustainable tourism and protecting the space of this reserve, by implementing the national tourism offer, higher socio-cultural, economic and ecological benefits can be achieved. The results of this research indicate that forms of tourism such as: ecotourism, science tourism, trips, bird and animal watching, can be a basic form of tourist visits. The most significant potential of the SNR is the highly endangered species of the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*), which is the symbol of this protected area.*

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Sustainable tourism, Special Nature Reserve “Meadows of Great Bustard”, Nature-based tourism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The SNR is characterized by very rare nature-mosaics of flatland, steppe, saline soil, and wetlands. However, the basic value of this protected area is the only remaining flock of Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) in Serbia, located on the southeastern border of its Central European extension (BirdLife International, 2017). The Great Bustard is a globally vulnerable species (VU) (Martin et al., 2000; Gooch et al., 2015) and strictly protected species in Serbia. The local community has little interest in protecting this area, so there are no local benefits from the current tourism development. In contrast, this reserve represents a highly significant destination for researchers of tourism development, from which significant socio-cultural, economic, and ecological benefits can be achieved (Diamantis, 1999; Makame & Boon, 2008). Defining the aims of nature protection and socio-economic development, thus achieving long-term goals of sustainability (Goodwin, 2002; Xu et al., 2009; Farsari, 2012; Araña & León, 2016; Notzke, 2016; Teerakapibal, 2016), requires the engagement of a number of different organizational structures (Price, 2006; Heslinga, Groote & Vanclay, 2017; Leung et al., 2018). A large part of the income from the visits of this reserve would be invested in improving its protection.

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Therefore, this would also be a direct investment in creating an ecotourism destination (Hall, 2010; Holladay & Ormsby, 2011). Ecotourism is present and widely accepted as an activity that influences the overcoming of many obstacles (Nepal, 1997; Cheng, Jin & Wong, 2014) and it has become extremely important in creating the policy for the preservation and development of the social community in many countries (Butcher, 2011; Wardle et al., 2018). This also affects the achievement of socio-cultural, economic, and ecological sustainability (Fennell & Weaver, 2005; Trišić, Štetić & Krstić, 2018), which results in increasingly intensive socio-economic, political, and ecological changes which create highly significant interests for PNAs (Wight, 2002; Burns, 2011; Larson & Poudyal, 2012; Butzmann & Job, 2017; Pyke et al., 2018). These are areas where tourists observe, think, and understand the natural environment and the living world (Eagles et al., 2013). PNAs are significant resources for ecotourism in many countries (Bello, Carr & Lovelock, 2016), including Norway, Sweden, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Wearing & Huyskens, 2001), then Finland, Poland, USA, (Wray, Espiner & Perkins, 2010), Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, etc. (Wachowiak, 2005). The aim of the research in this paper is to determine the basic hypothesis, which is whether the SNR is a subject of interest of domestic and international tourists and whether there is a potential for tourism development at the regional and international level. This will be determined by using the survey and the analysis of science - theoretical facts which will be examined through the comparative method with similar research results from the world (Štetić & Trišić, 2018).

2. STUDY PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The area of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has 135 PNAs in the area of approximately 141,044.65 ha. That is 6.56% of the total area of the territory of Vojvodina. This area covers significant PNAs, many of which possess the international conservation status. The protection of nature covers: 1 national park, 2 landscapes of exceptional characteristics, 16 special nature reserves, 9 nature parks, 8 strict nature reserves, 23 natural monuments, 2 protected habitats, 3 memorial natural monuments, as well as natural assets of other categories.

The area of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has significant ecotourism resources of untouched nature. These resources are a significant plant and animal world that includes endemic plant and animal species, sensitive ecosystems such as numerous wetland habitats and various types of land, numerous special nature reserves, nature parks, and other spatial units. Proper monitoring and protection of economic revenues from ecotourism which can be used to improve the protection system. Ecotourism and nature-based in the PNAs of Vojvodina and SNR, can affect the forms of ecosystems, the structure of the living world, the activities in the area, and the establishment of levels and protection regimes. Initiating nature-based tourism, in the PNAs of Vojvodina and in SNR, the accompanying infrastructure is being built. In this way, the Seeker species are resettled in certain places. In recent years, the demand for ecotourism in Vojvodina's PNAs has increased. Tourism demand is made of domestic and foreign tourists, who recognized the potential for the development of ecotourism in Vojvodina. Research results in this paper can provide guidelines for national strategies of sustainable tourism development with the help of protected PNAs, both in Serbia and in many other countries. The results thus obtained can be significant in helping create the highest quality tourism offer of nature-based forms of tourism.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The SNR covers the area of about 6,774 ha. It is located in the north of the Republic of Serbia in the Banat region. The reserve ranges between 45°52'48" N and 45°55'15" N, and from 20°16'09" E to 20°19'52" E. A favorable geographical location is reflected in the vicinity of Belgrade (capital city of Serbia), other cities as well as proximity to Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is also significant for ecotourism. The habitat of the Great Bustard is a preserved Pannonian landscape which is classified in the IV category by IUCN and it is the I category natural site of exceptional importance (Grujičić, Milijić & Nonić, 2008; Griffin & Stacey, 2011), which is significant for managing the PNAs. The reserve has been nominated for inclusion into the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1974). The SNR is protected in order to preserve the unique primordial mosaic of steppe, saline soil, and wetlands of great significance for the ecosystem (Mitsch, Bernal & Hernandez, 2015). This area represents the resort for the only remaining population of the Great Bustard in the Republic of Serbia. Since 1997, when this area was declared as an SNR, their number has been reduced from 37 to approximately 30 individuals as recorded by counting in 2015 (Štetić & Šimičević, 2018). After the monitoring of this species in 2017, only 11 individuals have been estimated to be present in the area, which is an alarming fact (Decree on the designation of the Special Nature Reserve “Meadows of Great Bustard” (“Official Gazette of RS”, № 5/2010); The report on the implementation of the protection program of the natural sites for 2017, 2018)).

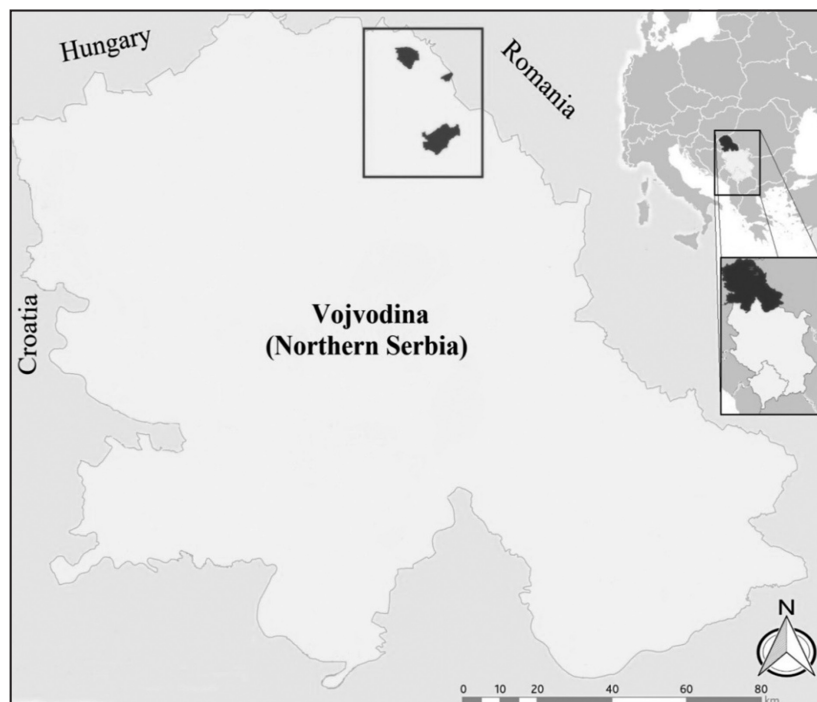


Figure 1. Map of Vojvodina,
Special Nature Reserve “Meadows of Great Bustard” (SNR) - study area

Source: authors

3.1. Methods

In order to determine the degree of ecotourism and sustainable tourism development, it is necessary to conduct a proper analysis and valorization of the basic elements and all potential factors of sustainable tourism development (Lück, 2002; Fennell, 2015; Liburd & Becken, 2017). It is

also important to analyze the views of the users of this area from the aspect of experiences and potential suggestions in order to improve the condition of natural elements and the results of the area protection, which, as the result, can increase the benefits for all the subjects and users of these areas (Holden, 2016; Maksin et al., 2018; Stojanović, Lazić & Đunić, 2018). The analysis of the obtained data of the survey conducted among the visitors in the SNR and those that wish to visit such a tourism destination can be useful in setting the criteria and general aims of eco and sustainable tourism development (Butler, 1999; Kim et al., 2019). These criteria and aims should certainly implement the tourism development of the PNAs in the nature-based tourism offer (Rinzin, Vermeulen & Glasbergen, 2007; Vespestad & Lindberg, 2011) both in the Republic of Serbia and other countries in the region or Europe. From the aforementioned, it was significant to conduct the research and determine the existence and function of 6 selected factors within this SNR which can impact the making of real conclusion regarding the area protection, ecotourism, and sustainable development (Donohoe, 2011). All respondents were asked the questions during or after their travel, within a written or an online questionnaire. The questionnaire, in addition to the general question regarding the respondents (Table 1), contained 6 questions ($n_1, n_2, n_3 \dots n_6$) which related to the views on the present factors of the tourism development within the SNR and the level of tourism development (Table 2). Respondents answered the question regarding tourism activities, and answers were ranked by a Likert scale (Joshi et al., 2015). This ranking of answers is identical to the answers rated in the author's questionnaire, i.e. with the answers ranked by relevance on the following scale: 1 – I completely disagree, 2 – I partially disagree, 3 – neutral point of view, 4 – I partially agree, 5 – I completely agree. The results of the questionnaire will be examined by the *One – Simple Test* method and shown tabulated. This test allows us to reach certain conclusions, based on respondents' answers (One-Simple), in situations where we do not have complete information such as attitudes toward certain statements and appearances. One - Simple Test is designed to test the received responses presented as mean values.

Each question (as claim) from the questionnaire will be partially shown tabulated, with the help of graphs in order to conceive the potential results of the research. After examining and presenting these results of the author's research, there will be conducted a comparative method with identical, related, and similar results of a research which was actualized in Finland during a ten-year period. This analysis was carried out with the research results of the visitors that visited different PNAs. Respondents gave answers to different questions on the principle of Likert scale (1-5). Questions were related to the significance of area protection, the motives the visit, and the effects of these destinations on tourism development. The analysis on the significance of the type of PNAs the analysis of travel motives, types of activities within PNAs, and specific views on nature-based tourism was conducted as a part of this research. This comparative method with selected data will provide a unique conclusion of the research and also determine the basic hypotheses of the paper regarding the level of this SNR's significance in creating the tourism offer in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (Northern Serbia) which can be of significance to the whole region due to its specific natural characteristics.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to determine the effects of 6 selected factors on the sustainable development of the SNR and forming a significant tourism offer at the international level, the authors conducted a questionnaire among 650 visitors (N) of the PNAs during their visits of this or some other protected site during 2018. All the answers of the respondents are usable. The cities of the respondents

(domestic tourists N = 472) are Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Smederevo, Indija, Sremska Mitrovica, Sombor, Subotica, and Novi Pazar. The cities of the foreign tourists (N = 178) are Bucharest – Romania (N = 61), Zagreb – Croatia (N = 42), Ljubljana – Slovenia (N = 11), Banja Luka – Republic of Srpska (N = 22), Szeged (N = 9) and Budapest (N = 12) – Hungary, Athens – Greece (N = 9), and Skopje – the Republic of North Macedonia (N = 12).

Table 1. Structure of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	
Male	337	51.8	
Female	313	48.2	
Total	650	100.0%	
Education	Frequency	Percent	
Primary	27	4.2	
Secondary	244	37.6	
Higher	157	24.1	
High	222	34.1	
Total	650	100%	
Age structure	N	Min	Max
	650	18	73
	Mean	Std. Dev.	
	36.85	14.228	

Source: author's calculation

Table 2. Sustainable tourism development factors within the SNR

n	N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean		Std. Dev.
The natural resources of this protected area are used in tourism	650	4	1	5	1558	2.40	.041	1.034
The recommendations for tourism activities in terms of preservation of this protected area are defined	650	4	1	5	1976	3.04	.036	.906
There are sufficient funds for the development of tourism in this protected area	650	4	1	5	1853	2.85	.050	1.269
The participation of the local community is important in the systems of protection and control over this area	650	4	1	5	2048	3.15	.041	1.035
Environmental factors and preserved nature are important for the tourism of this area in the region	650	4	1	5	2616	4.02	.042	1.059
This protected natural area can be significant for the development of tourism at the regional and international level	650	4	1	5	2397	3.69	.053	1.350
Total	650							

Source: author's calculation

Table 3. The definition of the differences of given answers regarding the factors of sustainable tourism development within the SNR using One-Simple Test

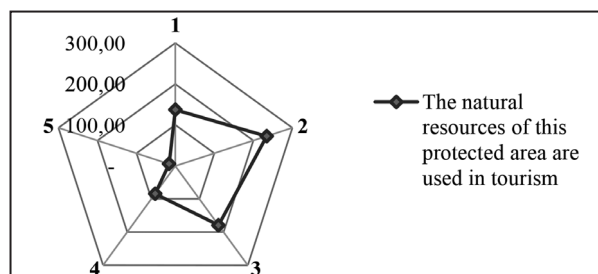
n	Test value 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
n ₁	59.113	649	.000	2.397	2.32	2.48
n ₂	85.527	649	.000	3.040	2.97	3.11
n ₃	57.290	649	.000	2.851	2.75	2.95
n ₄	77.613	649	.000	3.151	3.07	3.23
n ₅	96.907	649	.000	4.025	3.94	4.11
n ₆	69.620	649	.000	3.688	3.58	3.79

Source: author's calculation

The following text is the elaboration of the answers to the questions asked.

Table 4. The answers of the respondents regarding the use of natural resources for tourism purposes

The natural resources of this protected area are used in tourism				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
n ₁	1	137	21.1	21.1
	2	234	36.0	57.1
	3	179	27.5	84.6
	4	84	12.9	97.5
	5	16	2.5	100.0
	Total		650	100.0



Graph 1. The answers of the respondents regarding the statement – n1

Source: author's calculation

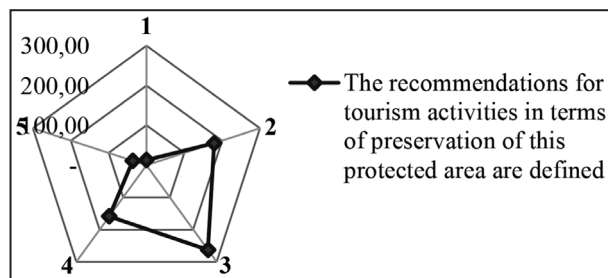
By analyzing the above results, we can conclude that a small number of respondents (15.4%) declared, fully or partially, that the natural resources within the SNR are used as ecotourism potential. On the arrival to the reserve, the visitors chose the natural features of this reserve over the health and cultural ones which are complementary in this destination. This is important in the theoretical understanding of sustainable tourism which must include the socio-cultural, ecological, and economic aspect of tourism development (Weaver, 2010; Navarro, Martines & Jiménez, 2019). Given that 57.1% of respondents indicated that natural resources in the SNR are not used as potential in tourism, it is extremely important to see all the possibilities for changing this attitude. This will be written in further elaboration of this topic.

Analyzing the answers in Table 5 and Graph 2, we can notice that opinions are almost divided. A total of 192 respondents consider this claim untrue, while 195 respondents believe this claim is true.

A total of 263 respondents have neutral opinions on this matter. It is obvious that there are no clearly defined messages for the preservation of the area by tourists. This data indicates negligence on both local and wider community about the development of ecotourism in this PNAs. When planning development strategies, it is important to define recommendations for tourism activities within the PNAs (Banerjee, 2012; Dudley, MacKinnon & Stolton, 2014; Whittle, Stewart & Fisher, 2015).

Table 5. The existence of defined recommendations for tourism activities in terms of preservation of the SNR area

The recommendations for tourism activities in terms of preservation of this protected area are defined				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
n ₂	1	13	2.0	2.0
	2	179	27.5	29.5
	3	263	40.5	70.0
	4	159	24.5	94.5
	5	36	5.5	100.0
	Total		650	100.0

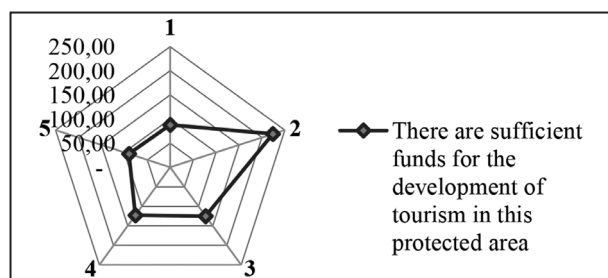


Graph 2. The answers of the respondents regarding the statement - n₂

Source: author's calculation

Table 6. There are sufficient funds for the development of tourism in this protected area

There are sufficient funds for the development of tourism in this protected area				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
n ₃	1	88	13.5	13.5
	2	224	34.5	48.0
	3	125	19.2	67.2
	4	123	18.9	86.2
	5	90	13.8	100.0
	Total		650	100.0



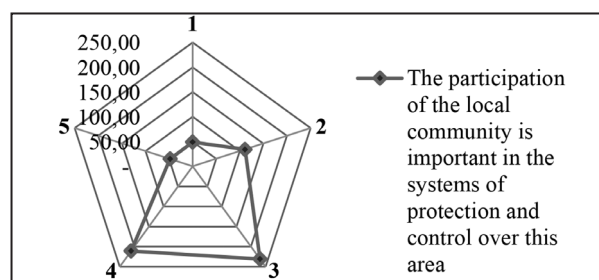
Graph 3. The answers of the respondents regarding the statement – n₃

Source: author's calculation

When answering this question, tourists used the degree of construction and functionality of the tourism infrastructure within the SNR about which they were informed in person on the field or when selecting this reserve for the visit. By investing in the reserve, it is also invested in the local community (Cottrell & Cutumisu, 2006; Butowski, 2019), which is one of the aims of tourism development. However, it is obvious that sufficient funds are not allocated here to improve the protection of space and the development of ecotourism (67.2%). Practice proves that tourists are also willing to pay higher amounts if that is for the best interests of environmental protection and ecological principles (Hjalager, 2000; Hodder et al., 2014; Doran, Hanss & Larsen, 2017).

Table 7. Is the participation of the local community important in the systems of the protection and control over this area?

The participation of the local community is important in the systems of protection and control over this area				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
n₄	1	49	7.5	7.5
	2	111	17.1	24.6
	3	231	35.5	60.2
	4	211	32.5	92.6
	5	48	7.4	100.0
	Total		650	100.0



Graph 4. The answers of the respondents regarding the statement – n₄

Source: author's calculation

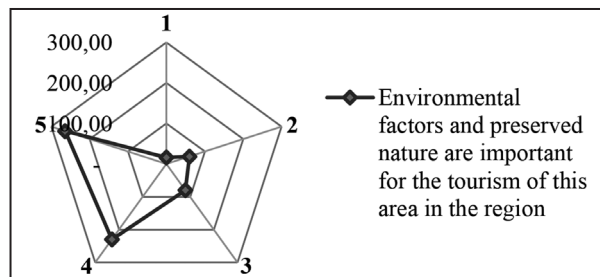
By analyzing the data in Table 7 and Graph 4, we can conclude that 39.9% of the respondents, completely or partially, agree with the statement that the role of the local community is important for the protection and the protection monitoring in the SNR as well as for the promotion of natural and social values within this reserve. The results of this analysis indicate the need to raise awareness about ecology and the development of ecotourism. A large number of respondents who have a neutral attitude, almost half, represent some kind of warning (alert) for further action. There is obviously an insufficiently developed awareness of the importance of the local community, which is later transferred to its role in the making decisions for development of strategy for the SNR. By involving the local community in the systems of protection and management, all additional management objectives and prerequisites for tourism development are achieved (Gunsoy & Hannam, 2013; Mellon & Bramwell, 2016), which means that the local community has multiple significance for ecotourism and tourism development (Park & Kim, 2016; Job, Becken & Lane, 2017; Muñoz et al., 2019). Ecotourism can help in community development by providing the alternate source of livelihood to local community.

A total of 12.3% respondents are neutral on this issue, and 11.7% of the respondents disagree partially or completely with this statement. An extremely high percentage of respondents who expressed total or partial agreement (76%) with this claim should be the direction when plan-

ning the protection of this area or its improvement, as well as in the development of the strategy of tourism development at the national level.

Table 8. Are environmental factors and preserved nature important for the tourism of this area and region?

Environmental factors and preserved nature are important for the tourism of this area in the region				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
n ₅	1	16	2.5	2.5
	2	60	9.2	11.7
	3	80	12.3	24.0
	4	230	35.4	59.4
	5	264	40.6	100.0
	Total		650	100.0

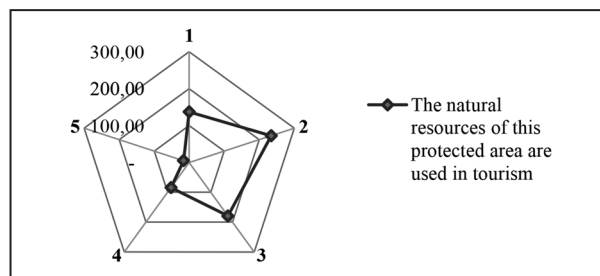


Graph 5. The answers of the respondents regarding the statement – n₅

Source: author's calculation

Table 9. Can this protected natural area be significant for the development of tourism at the regional level?

This protected natural area can be significant for the development of tourism at the regional and international level				
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
n ₆	1	57	8.8	8.8
	2	111	17.1	25.8
	3	50	7.7	33.5
	4	192	29.5	63.1
	5	240	36.9	100.0
	Total		650	100.0



Graph 6. The answers of the respondents regarding the statement – n₆

Source: author's calculation

Previous statements in support are the answers to this question because it is wholly or partially concurred 66.4% respondents, while neutral and negative attitude has 33.6% of the respondents. These results indicate that a natural resource such as SNR represents a significant tourism potential for ecotourism development at the national, regional and international levels.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OBTAINED RESEARCH RESULTS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN SERBIA AND FINLAND

Research results in Finnish PNAs, as highly significant tourism areas in Europe, can confirm that the SNR can have great environmental and tourism significant at the regional and international level. Surveys in Finland were conducted in a written or online questionnaire during tourists' visits to these areas or their travel selection. The subjects of the research were 74 different PNAs. The period in which the survey was conducted was from 2000 to 2010. The number of respondents was 34,868 and there were 34,828 valid answers. A total of 90% of the respondents were Finns, while the rest of foreign tourists were German (N = 713), Swedish (N = 186), and Dutch (N = 175). Over 30% of the respondents had a college degree, while 25% had a master's degree or higher university degree. Just over 30% of the respondents have visited some of the PNAs for the first time, while others have traveled to these destinations at least once (Konu & Kajala, 2012). A total of 14,580 respondents stated that they prefer natural motives of their travels which exist in PNAs (compatible with the question n_5 from the author's questionnaire). Over 70% of the respondents opted for traveling to national parks and nature reserves. As for nature reserves, the most significant are those areas located in rural areas (1,866 respondents). These are followed by the reserves in main regions (214 respondents) and in heavily populated areas (1,034 respondents). This important data can be used to define the strategy of tourism development of PNAs (Sharpley, 2009; Catibog-Sinha, 2010; Fodness, 2017) both at national and international level (Janssen, 2009; Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2013; Stumpf, Sandstrom & Swanger, 2016; Saarinen, Rogerson & Hall, 2017) where the geographical position and traffic accessibility are significant for tourism development and the sustainability of a destination (Shultis & Way, 2006; Kim et al., 2015; Saarinen, 2015). This is confirmed by the result of this survey in which respondents state the significance of certain activities due to which they opted for this travel (n_1 , n_2). Therefore, 16,808 respondents opted for walking, 3,248 for hiking, 5,920 respondents chose nature photographing, and 2,072 respondents opted for just observing nature. A total of 15.66% of the respondents identified themselves as "explorers", while 17.39% identified themselves as exclusively "nature-loving" travelers (n_1 , n_2 , n_3). This indicates to the significance of services within the reserve (Jamal & Stronza, 2009) when more service providers can be engaged (Buckley, 2002; Rotherham, Doncaster & Egan, 2005; Farmaki, 2015; Geneletti, Scolozzi & Esmail, 2018) which is important from the aspect of tourism development (Kensbock & Jennings, 2011; Robertson, 2011). Other respondents opted for the importance of protecting nature reserves as tourism destinations (n_5 , n_6). As the most significant segments of the experiences they had on their travels in PNAs, over 60% of the respondents stated the following as the most significant: nature experience, landscapes, evoking memories, relaxation, distancing from noise and pollution, good mental state, and discovering new areas (n_5 , n_6) (Konu & Kajala, 2012). This would result in the forming of a more quality destination of sustainable tourism development (n_1 , n_2 , n_3 ... n_6) (Timothy & White, 1999, Bramwell, 2010; Eagles, 2014). This should be the main characteristics of PNAs in relation to users (Okello & Yerian, 2009; Catlin, Jones, Jones, Norman & Wood, 2010; Reimann, Lamp & Palang, 2011; Valdivieso, Eagles & Gil, 2015). With this analysis we have identified the exceptional importance of comparative analyzes of similar research in the world, which give us the opportunity to find optimal solutions for the development of protected areas.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This data indicates that natural motives are significant tourism potential. They are the subject of numerous tourist interests, which is the result of research in this paper. Untouched nature and protection of endangered plants and animals are the basic elements of ecotourism destinations. The environmental factors and preserved nature have an important role in ecotourism and sustainable tourism development. The sustainability of the basic elements of the eco-destination and the improvement of the system of protection requires greater resources. However, the fact that tourism consumption drives the economy and all other activities should not be ignored. Efficient management is the most important factor in the implementation of sustainable development.

By analyzing the above results, it is established that PNAs with well-organized tourism infrastructure, organized protection and monitoring, pristine nature, and a good location can represent significant regional and international tourism destinations. As the result of the comparative analysis, we can conclude that significant investments are required for the protection of the area and species within the SNR. It is necessary to improve the existent tourism infrastructure and to build a new one, to develop an ecological network and to respect certain protection zones, and allowed activities. This would result in the forming of a more quality destination of sustainable tourism development ($n_1, n_2, n_3 \dots n_6$). The reduction of the agricultural land space in the reserve area is important for further tourism development and the protection of the SNR because it directly affects the loss of habitats. It is necessary to actively include the representatives of the local community in the protection and management. Major allocations and investments in the protection would improve the tourism significance of this reserve. With this in mind, the results of these studies give us the ability to predict the required investment for the sustainable development of this region.

7. CONCLUSION

The planned development of a tourism destination must be in coordination with socio-economic, social, and sustainable principles, with regard to the protection of the environment. Unless there is a clear concept of PNAs management, this leads to negative consequences for the environment and threatens the sustainability of the SNR. Planning is particularly important for PNAs in order to adequately use the available resources and to fully include the local community. In this way, the adequate experience of tourists is enabled which affects their satisfaction and experience in a protected area. Bearing in mind favorable geographical and tourism positions of the SNR within Serbia and surrounding countries, this represents a significant potential for a tourism demand of a tourism product such as the SNR. After a conducted survey among 650 domestic and foreign tourists and the questions regarding the levels and degrees of tourism development and the significance of area protection, we came to certain conclusions. According to the answers of respondents, the SNR can represent a significant regional and international ecotourism destination of sustainable development or some other form based on nature and ecology. The reason for this is that the SNR has very rare natural characteristics, such as relief, favorable climate, the systems of wetlands, and rare plant and animal species among which is the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) which is within an ace of disappearing from these areas. The aforementioned potentials make this area a unique tourism destination and they are the subject of interest for different types of visitors based on ecology and nature conservation. This is evidenced by the results of a comparative analysis with conducted research among tourists visiting PNAs of Finland. It was concluded here that PNAs can represent very attractive eco destinations where certain significant socio-cul-

tural, ecological, and economic results of eco and sustainable tourism development are achieved. After certain interventions in the SNR, in terms of the construction of tourism infrastructure, intensifying the protection of area and species, the inclusion of the local community in monitoring and management systems, the SNR can be a highly significant destination of sustainable development at the regional and international level. From the above research in Finland and the SNR, the same results are evident when it comes to defining natural motifs and ecological areas during the travel. Based on the results of the survey in Finland, it can be concluded that PNAs are very attractive to visitors, and they can represent a significant tourism destination (Schmudde, 2015). Research of factors for the development of protected areas in Serbia is a very important part of the future development of tourism. According to the answers of the respondents from the author's conducted survey and according to the results from the comparative analysis, the SNR has the same or similar natural potentials for tourism development. Therefore, this SNR can be a significant destination of sustainable tourism development at the national, regional and international level. By this, the hypothesis of this paper has been confirmed.

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