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SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN NATIONAL PARK “ĐERDAP”, SERBIA - ATTITUDES OF LOCAL POPULATION

Jovana Brankov^{*1}, *Dobrica Jovičić*^{**}, *Dragana Milijašević*^{*}

^{*} Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić”, SASA, Belgrade, Serbia

^{**} Faculty of Geography, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

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Abstract: In the context of the broader controversy about sustainable development, tourism literature highlights the importance of the support of the local population to tourism development. The active support of the community is essential for the local government, the future development policies and all entities that participate in the creation of sustainable tourism development. The specific dimension of this influence exists in protected areas, given the pronounced strong environmental component and a bond that is created among tourism - protected area - locals. The paper analyzes the attitudes and opinions of the local population residing in the National Park “Đerdap” or its protection zone about the effects and control of tourism development, as well as the availability of information on sustainable tourism and the impact this activity has on the community. The method applied is survey research on a sample of 227 respondents. During the preparation of the survey, the methodological procedure for the analysis of sustainable tourism indicators were used proposed by the World Tourism Organization.

Key words: sustainable tourism, local community, NP “Đerdap”

Introduction

In recent decades, tourism literature is largely focused on studying the mutual impacts between tourism and the local community. Thus in 1980, Butler (1980) suggests a link between tourism development and the attitudes of local people towards tourists. As the number of visitors of a region increases, residents who initially were very positive in their attitudes gradually become reserved when it comes to long-term benefits of tourism. Similarly, certain models of tourism development claim that the attitude of the local population towards tourism go through several stages: from euphoria to antagonism (Doxey 1975; Murphy, 1981; Akis, Peristianis, & Warner, 1996). Murphy (1985) emphasized the need for each community to link the development of tourism with local needs, which was one of the bases for many later studies on the various relationships between tourism and local communities (Richards & Hall, 2000).

¹ Correspondence to: j.brankov@gi.sanu.ac.rs

In the context of the debate on sustainable development, it is argued that an understanding of community support to tourism development is of crucial importance for the local self-government, development policy and enterprises, because the success and sustainability of any development (and therefore tourism) depend on the active support of this segment of the population. The authors agree in saying that planners and entrepreneurs who are engaged in tourism development must take into account the views of local community, if they want to achieve long-term sustainability of the tourism industry (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Murphy, 1983; Maddox, 1985; Allen, Long, Perdue, & Kieselbach, 1988; Ap & Crompton, 1998). There are several reasons why the reactions of the local population to tourism are important, besides the basic one - the impact on quality of life. Namely, the additional commercial tourism activities can often be difficult or suspended due to opposition of the local population (Williams & Lawson, 2001), and active opposition often and to a great extent hindered or stopped the development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). However, if one knows why residents support or oppose tourism development, it is possible to choose a development policy that will reduce the negative social impacts and maximize the support for such alternatives, which will improve the quality of the local community life (Williams & Lawson, 2001).

Considering that the importance of the local community support is widely recognized, researchers began to examine the different spheres of influence between tourism and locals. This impact is largely studied in the economic sphere (Liu & Var, 1986; Getz, 1986; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000; Lee, 2013), and by the time other dimensions have been analyzed, such as cultural (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002), social (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Williams & Lawson, 2001; Simons, 2008; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012), political (Mansfeld, 1992) and environmental protection (Liu, Sheldon, & Var, 1987; Bonaiuto, Carrus, Martorella, & Bonnes, 2002; Holmes, 2013). Studies using survey researching to analyze all mentioned influence spheres collectively are also significant (Cardozo, 2011; Hanafiah, Jamaluddin, & Zulkifly, 2013; Gupta & Prakash, 2014).

Local Residents and Protected Areas

When it comes to the importance and role of local people in tourism development, protected areas represent a special dimension, given the pronounced environmental component and the bond that is created among tourism - protected area - locals (Eagles & McCool, 2002). As protected areas are concerned, the authors are unanimous that finding ways to improve and strengthen the relations between the local population and protected area is

crucial for the successful long-term conservation of these areas (Fiallo & Jacobson, 1995; Furze, de Lacy, & Birckhead, 1996; Allendorf et al., 2006; Holmes, 2013), and the positive attitude of the public is at the same time a key indicator of the success of the protected area in all spheres (T. Struhsaker, P. Struhsaker, & Siex, 2005). A better understanding of relationships and mutual influences on this relation makes it possible to improve the ability of biodiversity conservation areas, maximize the benefit to the population living in and around protected areas, who is often among the most marginalized social groups (Holmes, 2013). However, as the relationship between local residents and protected resources often leads to the relocation or deprives people of access to resources of which they are dependent for generations (Allendorf et al., 2006), the key to anticipating these activities is to understand the attitudes and needs of the local population, because it should provide guidance for policy and management decisions, and is also the basis for assessing the success of future activities (Hill, 1998; Gillingham & Lee, 1999; Weladji, Moe, & Vedeld, 2003).

A centralized approach to planning and management of protected areas in Serbia in the past has minimized the role and importance of the local population living in the territory or along the border of the protected area (Tomićević, Milovanović & Konold, 2005), which contradicts the theory that supports the active participation of the community and taking into account its needs and attitudes when implementing management decisions. Given that the national parks are the most important and most complex protected areas, in an attempt to develop tourism in a sustainable direction, the attitude of the local population should not be bypassed.

The paper analyzes the attitudes and opinions of the local population residing in the National Park “Đerdap” or its protection zone, which concern the effects and control of tourism development, as well as the availability of information on sustainable tourism and the impact that this activity has on the community.

Field of Study

The Đerdap National Park is located in the north-eastern part of Serbia, on the border with Romania and spatially covers the narrow corridor of the Đerdap Gorge, i.e. its right valley slope and coastal sector of the Danube from Golubac to Karataš, at a length of almost 100 km (Figure 1). It was placed under protection in 1974, covers an area of 637.68 km² and territory of three municipalities (Golubac, Majdanpek and Kladovo) (Nikolić, 2006; Institute of Architecture and Urban and Spatial Planning of Serbia, 2013).

Its main feature is a composite river valley of the Danube, which in the Đerdap gorge consists of four gorges (Golubačka, Gospodin vir, Mali and Veliki Kazan and Sipska) and three valleys (Ljupkovska, Donjomilanovačka and Oršavska), which alternate with each other.



Figure 1. Boundaries of the National Park "Đerdap" and its protection zone (Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2015)

Thanks to the specific historical development, favourable climate and complex geomorphologic characteristics, the area of Đerdap today represents a unique nature reserve of tertiary flora and fauna. The territory of the National Park is represented by over 1 100 plant species (of which 43 species are strictly protected and 124 are protected) and over 150 species of birds (www.npdjerdap.org). In addition to diversity, flora and fauna of this area are characterized by a marked endemic and relict character. Due to the favourable conditions of life, man was constantly present in this area, as evidenced by numerous archaeological sites and cultural and historical monuments ("Lepenski Vir", Castrum "Diana", fortresses "Golubac" and "Fetislam", "Tabula Traiana", remains of "Trajan's Bridge" and Castrum "Pontes", etc.). Thanks to all of the above, the National Park "Đerdap" is abundant in representative and attractive natural and cultural values, and having a special, protected status, the ideas of achieving sustainable tourism development in the NP have a realistic basis and deserve to be considered professionally in the future.

Methodology

A survey was applied as methodological procedure in the data collection. The survey was conducted during the summer of (August) 2014 in three municipalities which the NP “Đerdap” covers (Golubac, Majdanpek and Kladovo). The initial idea for the pattern that would cover the survey research was to be people from the population largest settlements within or on the border with the NP (because tourist offer is the most prominent in these settlements, so the contact of the locals with tourists is the most intensive), different ages and gender.

During the preparation of the survey, the methodological procedure for the analysis of sustainable tourism indicators was used, proposed by the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2004), and adapted for the investigated area. In order to examine the various dimensions of the respondents views, and especially to obtain precise information, when testing was performed a mixture of alternative questions and statements was used. Local residents were interviewed in the three largest tourist centres of the NP - Golubac, Donji Milanovac and Kladovo. The sample consisted of 227 respondents, of which 106 were male and 121 female. The survey was carried out by a written survey and filling was made after oral responses obtained from respondents of randomly selected sample. The survey was conducted by researchers of the Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” SASA, in cooperation with the Cultural Centre of Kladovo.

Analysis of the questionnaires is processed by gender and age, in order to determine whether there is a substantial difference in attitudes towards tourism and tourists at men and women and different age groups. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and Excel programs and the method of descriptive statistics. To check the differences in observed characteristics, i.e. frequencies of two or more independent samples, chi-square test and the formula for calculating the differences in frequencies were used:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_0 - f_i)^2}{f_i} \quad (1)$$

In this term, f_0 is observed frequencies and f_i is expected frequencies. To determine the strength of the relationship between the category variables, the Cramer's (V) coefficient was used.

The objective of the analysis has also been to identify the elements that influence a positive/negative attitude towards the tourism industry. The results can be practically applied for the guidance of future tourist programs and the creation of development policy which would be in this way reconciled with the needs of the local community and provide support of this kind.

Attitudes towards Tourism and Benefit of the Local Population of Tourism

Respondents were first offered to select a response that reflects their opinion on two general allegations. The first one is whether tourism is good for their community or whether they as individuals have a personal benefit of this activity (Table 1).

Table 1. Attitudes towards tourism and benefit of the local population of tourism

Question	Frequency				
	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism is good for my settlement / municipality	8	1	21	63	134
I personally benefit from the tourism industry	38	47	55	40	47

1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

Regarding the statement: “*Tourism is good for my settlement / municipality*“, the vast majority of respondents said that strongly agree (59%) or agree (27.8%). A number of respondents gave a neutral response (9.25%), while a minority had a negative attitude (4.1%). Chi-square test of independence did not show a significant relationship between the distribution of respondents' attitudes (agree / neutral and disagree) and their gender $\chi^2 (1, n = 227) = 3.11, p = 0.08, V = 0.13$. Also, as far as the age of respondents, it has been determined that there are no significant difference between the age groups of the population in attitudes about tourism in their settlement $\chi^2 (3, n = 227) = 2.21, p = 0.53, V = 0, 10$.

When it comes to the next statement: “*I personally benefit from the tourism industry*”, the responses were significantly differently distributed. A quarter of respondents gave a neutral response (24.3%), while the rest of the sample was almost evenly split between those who agree with this statement (20.7% of those who strongly agree and 17.6% of those who agree) and those who disagree (16.7% of those who strongly disagree and 20.7% of those who disagree). Chi-square test has shown that there is no significant relationship between the distribution of respondents' attitude and their gender $\chi^2 (4, n = 227) = 4.37, p = 0.36, V = 0.14$. Statistical significance has not been found when it comes to the age of the respondents $\chi^2 (12, n = 227) = 18.60, p = 0.10, V = 0.17$.

The Effects of Tourism on the Local Community

Special category of items to which respondents answered referred to the effects of tourism development in their community (Table 2). Although tourism is not the dominant activity, most respondents agree that its development is an opportunity for creating new jobs for the local population (30% of respondents agree and 29.5% of respondents strongly agree). When it comes to employing local youth which enables the development and advancement of tourism activity, opinions are divided. One part of the respondents agree with the statement that one of the tourism effects in their settlement is recruiting local youth population (26.9% of respondents agree and 24.6% of respondents strongly agree), while the other part of the respondents is neutral (20.7%) or disagree with this statement (18.1% of respondents disagree and 9.7% of respondents strongly disagree).

Opinions are divided when it comes to some other effects that the development of tourism can cause to the local community. Regarding the statement: “*The development of tourism in my settlement / municipality raises prices to different goods*”, a large number of respondents gave neutral (29.1%) or positive (32.6% of respondents agree, 18% of respondents strongly agree) answer, while one quarter of respondents consider that tourism does not cause the rise in prices of different goods.

Table 2. Effects of tourism on the local community

<i>Question</i>	Frequency				
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Tourism in my settlement/municipality has the following effects:</i>					
Creates jobs for local residents	11	36	45	68	67
Employs local youth	22	41	47	61	56
Raises prices for goods	24	22	66	74	41
Direct impact on the creation of new services (health, utilities, etc.)	36	44	45	57	45
Direct impact on the improvement of infrastructure (roads, water supply, sewer, waste disposal)	27	28	48	64	60
Increase in noise and crowds	67	75	42	33	10
Disrupts local activities	106	79	14	17	11
Harms the environment	83	79	36	17	12
Stops locals from attraction (beach, monument, trail) access	86	96	27	9	9
Helps stimulate local culture and crafts	24	25	47	83	48
Use natural resources needed by local residents (fish, water)	30	48	58	56	35

The respondents gave different answers when it comes to the claim: “The development of tourism has direct impact on the creation of new services (health, utilities, etc.) in my settlement/municipality”. Those who agree with this statement dominate to a certain extent (25% of respondents agree and 19.9% strongly agree), but there is a significant number of those who disagree (19.4% of respondents disagree and 15.9% of respondents strongly disagree) or give a neutral answer (19.8%).

When it comes to the relationship between tourism and the improvement of infrastructure, on the statement: “The development of tourism has direct impact on the improvement of infrastructure (roads, water supply, sewer, waste disposal) in my settlement/municipality”, the majority has given a positive response (28.2% of respondents agree and 26.5% of respondents strongly agree). A certain part of the sample is neutral (21.1%) or disagree with this statement (24.2%).

A large degree of agreement was observed with both genders and all age groups sampled for the claims about the impact of tourism on the increase in noise and crowds, where a significant majority of respondents gave a negative response (62.5%), while only 19% of participants in the survey agreed with the statement. Similar is with the environmental aspect of tourism and the possible negative

effects, where the majority of respondents believe that the development of this activity does not damage the environment. However, a smaller number of respondents (12.9%) agreed with the statement: “The development of tourism in my settlement/municipality harms the environment” or gave a neutral answer (15.8%).

Certain statements related to the interpretation of various aspects of the relation visitors - locals. The respondents by large percentage agree that the tourism development does not disrupt the activities of the local population (81.5%), and does not prevent the local population to access some attractions in the national park (80.2%). More than half of respondents (57.7%) agree that tourism in their settlement / municipality encourages the development of local culture and does not jeopardize the integrity and authenticity of the community. However, at this point a significant part of the respondents gave a neutral response (20.7%) or disagreed (21.6%).

Given that in the development of tourism and the organization of tourist arrivals and stay in the NP may be disagreements between visitors and the local population about the use of natural resources, one question was related to this relationship of the studied categories. Thus on the claim: “Tourism uses natural resources needed by local residents (fish, water, etc.)” certain part of the sample (40.3%) responded that they agreed or gave a neutral answer (25.5%). A third of respondents (34.4%) believe that tourism does not use natural resources needed by local population and thus does not come into potential conflict with the community.

In order to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the distribution of attitudes of the local population by gender and age, for the mentioned claims the chi-square test was used², which analyzes the differences between observed and expected frequencies. The test specifically compares the frequency distribution of responses in each category (gender and age) with the values that would be expected if there is no relationship between the variables (Table 3).

² In case of uniform answers (great majority of positive/negative answers), with extremely low values of expected frequencies (20% of all cells $f_t < 5$), the use of the chi-square test was not justifiable methodologically.

Table 3. Differences in attitudes of the local population about the effects of tourism by gender and age

<i>Tourism in my settlement/municipality has the following effects:</i>		χ^2 (p value)	Cramer's V coeffic.
Creates jobs for local residents	gender	0,361)	0,138
	age	0,352	0,139
Employs local youth	gender	0,694	0,099
	age	0,482	0,130
Raises prices for goods	gender	0,845	0,078
	age	0,288	0,144
Direct impact on the creation of new services (health, utilities, etc.)	gender	0,634	0,106
	age	0,072	0,170
Direct impact on the improvement of infrastructure (roads, water supply, sewer, waste disposal)	gender	0,213	0,160
	age	0,034*	0,181
Increase in noise and crowds	gender	0,351	0,140
	age	0,481	0,130
Disrupts local activities	gender	0,046*	0,207
	age	/	/
Harms the environment	gender	0,455	0,127
	age	0,821	0,080
Stops locals from attraction (beach, monument, trail) access	gender	0,049*	0,190
	age	/	/
Helps stimulate local culture and crafts	gender	0,931	0,061
	age	0,199	0,152
Use natural resources needed by local residents (fish, water, etc.)	gender	0,660	0,103
	age	0,011*	0,196

Of all the analyzed variables, a link has been established between age of the respondents and the attitude that tourism directly affects the improvement of infrastructure (roads, sewage, waste disposal, etc.) in their settlement. Age group 40-49 years gave the most neutral responses in relation to the total number of the respondents (36%). At the elderly population there is very strong agreement with this statement (66.1%), while at other age groups this percentage is more modest, but exceeds half the population (except in the category 40-49 years). Cramer's coefficient of correlation of variables (0.181) testifies on the medium correlation strength.

In addition, the correlation is found between the gender structure of respondents and the claims that tourism disrupts the activities of the local population and stops them to access certain attractions in the National Park. In both cases the men were prone to confirm these claims at higher percentage in relation to women. Cramer's coefficient values in both cases (0.207 for the first and 0.190 for the second claim) suggest very low correlation strength between the variables.

A statistically significant relationship was found between age of the respondents and the attitude that tourism makes use of natural resources needed to local people. In this case, the youngest population (up to 29 years) was the most restrained in responding (46.15% of neutral answers), while the answers are within the age group of 30-39 almost entirely divided between those who agree and those who disagree (only 10.5% of neutral answers). The majority of older population responded positively, and in the group 50+ there is higher percentage of those who answered negatively (35% compared to 30% in the group 40-49). Cramer's coefficient of correlation of variables (0.196) indicates the medium strength of the correlation between the variables.

Control of tourism development and views on sustainable tourism

In addition to statements which are related to the effects of tourism development, the respondents gave their opinion when it comes to control of tourism development of the local community. Half of the respondents agree that the local community controls the tourism development (34.8% of respondents agree, 15.8% strongly agree), while 24.7% of the sample gave a neutral answer. Others (24.7%) believe that the development of tourism is controlled by external entities.

Similarly, on the statement: “*The money spent by tourists remains in my community*”, 52.1% of respondents answered positively, while 23.3% gave a neutral response. A quarter of respondents (24.6%) believe that money from tourism does not stay in the local community (Table 4).

Table 4. Control of tourism development and views on sustainable tourism

Question	Frequency				
	1	2	3	4	5
The community has control over tourism	27	29	56	79	36
The money spent by tourists remains in my community	28	28	53	74	44
Local residents have easy access to the areas which tourists use	18	21	30	95	63
The right information on sustainable tourism in my settlement / municipality are available to me when I need them	30	34	53	72	38
I support the development of sustainable tourism in my settlement / municipality	3	3	14	87	120
I believe that I properly understand the impact of tourism on my community	2	4	33	95	93

1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

Special group of statements related to the attitudes of local population on sustainable tourism and availability of information dealing with this issue. The vast majority of respondents support the development of sustainable tourism in their settlement / municipality (even 52.9% of respondents strongly agree and 38.3% of respondents agree), which testifies to the fact that sustainable development is seen as a positive direction in the future organization of tourist activity. However, as far as the availability of adequate information about sustainable tourism, the situation is somewhat different. Regarding the statement “*The right information on sustainable tourism in my settlement / municipality are available to me when I need them*”, less than half of the respondents gave a positive response (31.7% of respondents agree and 16.8% of respondents strongly agree), while 23.3% of respondents gave a neutral answer. A certain part of the population surveyed disagree (15%) or strongly disagree (13.2%) with this statement, suggesting that even though the local population recognize the concept of “sustainable tourism” as a positive, it often does not have knowledge of what it means and how to get additional information. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (82.8%) believe that they properly understand the impact of tourism on the local community.

Analysis of the distribution of local population attitudes on the control of tourist development and sustainable tourism by gender and age (Table 5) identified a statistical correlation only in the case of respondents' age and statement on the availability of accurate information about the sustainable tourism.

Table 5. Differences in attitudes of local population about control of tourism development and sustainable tourism by gender and age

<i>Question</i>		χ^2 (<i>p value</i>)	Cramer's V coeffic.
The community has control over tourism	gender	0,881	0,072
	age	0,773	0,109
The money spent by tourists remains in my community	gender	0,622	0,108
	age	0,484	0,130
Local residents have easy access to the areas which tourists use	gender	0,134	0,176
	age	/	/
The right information on sustainable tourism in my settlement / municipality are available to me when I need them	gender	0,625	0,107
	age	0,023*	0,186
I support the development of sustainable tourism in my town / municipality	gender	/	/
	age	/	/
I believe that I properly understand the impact of tourism on my community	gender	/	/
	age	/	/

Category of respondents aged 30-39 years in a significantly higher percentage denied the claim about the availability of this type of information in relation to other categories (40% of negative responses). The value of Cramer's coefficient in this case is 0.186 and indicates a medium strength of correlation between the variables.

Status and Prospects of Tourism Development

Part of the research included the opinions of respondents on the current state of tourism in their settlement / municipality and attitudes related to the scope of the future organization of tourist trends. In this regard, the respondents were asked two questions, with the possibility to choose one answer: “*What is the current state of tourism development in your settlement / municipality?*” and “*Should in your settlement be more / less tourism in the future?*” (Figure 2). On the first question, the greatest number of respondents (34%) gave the answer that tourism is at a satisfactory level in their municipality, while there is a large number of those who think that the current situation is poor (32%) or even unsatisfactory (8%). 22.5% of respondents believe that the state of tourism development is good, and only 3.5% of respondents characterized the current level of tourism organization as excellent.

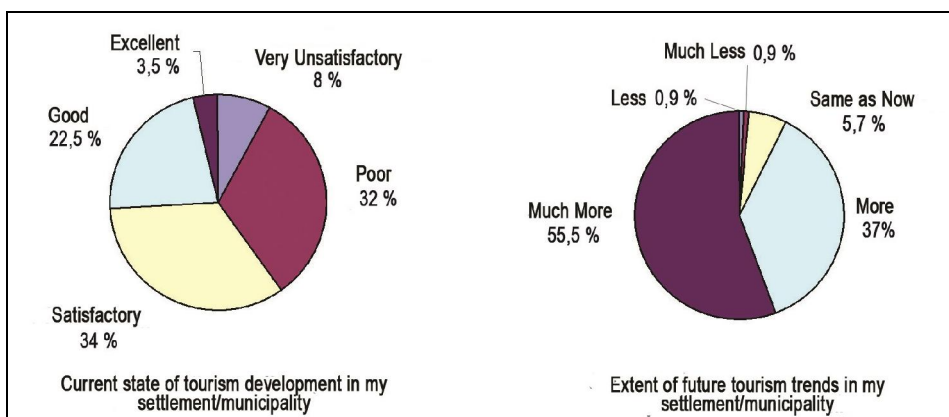


Figure 2. Attitudes of tourists about the current state of tourism development and extent of future tourism trends in their settlement / municipality (Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2015)

As for the organization of future tourism trends, the vast majority of respondents believe that in their settlement should be much more (56%) or more (37%) tourism. A small percentage of respondents (6%) believe that tourism should be organized in the same extent that now exists, and even fewer are those who think that the scope of tourist actions should be reduced (2%).

Conclusion

Analysis of the questionnaire survey has shown that the population of the National Park “Đerdap” generally recognize tourism as a possible driver of development and has a positive attitude towards this activity, although only a part of the respondents have personal benefit of tourism (38.3%). The positive effects are pointed out (lack of increased noise and large crowds, unobstructed access of the local population to the attractions, the smooth running of local activities and stimulating the local culture), around which a consensus is reached in the majority.

In general, significant differences were not observed between the genders in the distribution of answers to the questions, except when it comes to relation locals - tourists, i.e. the negative impact of tourism activity on the local population, where men have a more negative attitude in relation to women. When it comes to age, older population has a more positive attitude about the impact of tourism on the development of infrastructure, as well as the resources that this activity uses, and they are necessary for the local population, while the majority of younger population is abstained. Younger categories (especially age categories 30-39 years), unlike older population, do not believe that the information on sustainable tourism is accessible when they need them.

The local community is not properly informed how much is the development of tourism controlled at the local level, or where the expended funds go in this activity. The population recognize the concept of “sustainable tourism” as positive, though they often do not have knowledge about what exactly is meant under it or the way in which they could be informed. The results show the possibilities of improving the situation, because the majority of respondents believe that the tourist offer should be enriched and expanded in the future and that they understand the impact of tourism on the local community in the proper way. Actions that will follow should be focused on more detailed informing of the local population about the ways of possible involvement in the organization of the tourist offer, but also the management of protected area. Development policies aimed at sustainable tourism should place a special emphasis on the young population, adequate education and later gaining experience in practice. Given that the world's widely accepted concept of sustainable tourism lies in protected area, which as an important tool includes support of the local population, the positive mood of the inhabitants of the NP “Đerdap” should be used as a base for further development of tourism, and the local community should be included and educated for future actions.

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