

VISITORS' SATISFACTION: THE CASE OF THE "ŠARGAN – MOKRA GORA" NATURE PARK

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SUMMARY: The "Šargan – Mokra Gora" Nature Park is a touristic destination with exquisite nature features. Although tourism industry is developing, it succeeded in preserving authenticity so Nature Park is very attractive to domestic and foreign visitors. The aim of this paper is to investigate visitor satisfaction with the tourist offer of the "Šargan– Mokra Gora" Nature Park. The results showed that visitors are generally satisfied with the elements identify in the destination. Analysis of structure and preferences of the visitors could enables more adequate positioning of "Šargan– Mokra Gora" on the touristic market. At the same time, it is necessary to provide framework for development of quality, contemporary and innovative tourist offer that would enhance competitiveness of Šargan- Mokra Gora, and therefore its tourist offer.

Key words: Šargan- Mokra Gora, Nature Park, visitors' satisfaction, touristic destination.

INTRODUCTION

Šargan-Mokra Gora is specific touristic destination, since besides profiling touristic industry it succeeded in preserving authenticity, which gives it special importance and makes it very attractive for domestic and foreign tourists. By Law on environmental protection (*Official gazette of the Republic of Serbia no. 81/2008*) for this area was given a Nature Park status, which is a nature area of high national importance – category one (*Official gazette of the Republic of Serbia no. 66/91 and 83/92*). In the Nature Park, specific ways of tourist movements have developed. Most often are outing touristic movements (Marković et al., 2014). Moreover, this Nature Park is extremely attractive

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destination for eco-, country-, fishing-, hunting-, bicycle- and manifestation tourism (Obradović and Simić, 2004; Štetić, 2002). This destination is especially attractive due to “Drvengrad” at Mečavnik, created by Emir Kusturica, and “Šarganska osmica” railroad with trains and railroad objects (Obradović, 2006; Bešlić, 1987).

The aim of this paper is to research visitors satisfaction by tourist offer in “Šargan – Mokra Gora” Nature Park. The starting idea of this paper is that the “Šargan – Mokra Gora” Nature Park has a range of possibilities for satisfying its visitors. It is important to determinate visitors’ satisfaction, in order to improve tourist offer of Sargan

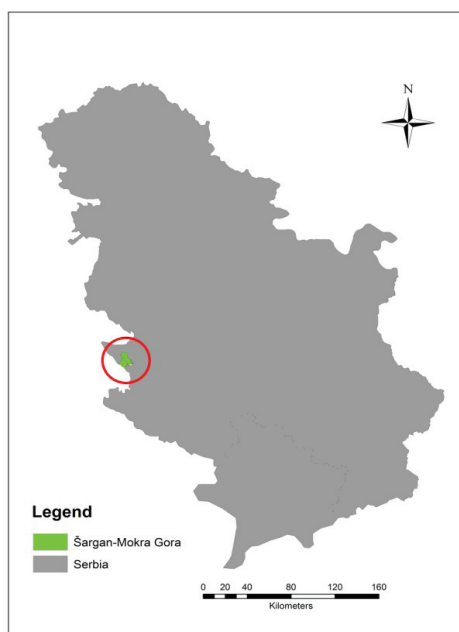


Fig. 1. Location of Nature Park „Šargan-Mokra Gora“ in Serbia

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Results of investigation were obtained by surveying visitors in “Šargan-Mokra Gora” Nature Park. Written materials regarding this area, as space plans, master plans and other documents were also used. Based on the literature review the questionnaire was formed. Total of 29 elements were identified in order to measure visitors satisfaction with the tourist offer in the natural park. The survey was conducted in the summer during 2010. Investigation was carried out on the localities of “Bele vode”, “Jatare” and “Drvengrad” at Mečavnik, with representative sample of 50 respondents.

For measurement purposes, 29 elements were identified and used to represent overall tourist offer in the destination such as attractiveness of the climate, amicability of the local population, amicability of tourism staff, helpfulness, foreign language knowledge of touristic workers, road network and accessibility of the destination, parking space, available information about destination, information at the destination, touristic signalization at destination, manifestations, souvenirs, organization of a destina-

tion, promenades and marked trails, crowdedness, scenery, environmental preservation, cleanliness, children's objects, lodging objects, restaurant objects, culture facilities, entertainment facilities, active vacation facilities, eco-tourism potentials, hunting tourism potentials, outing offer, local gastronomy, price/quality ratio and general evaluation of Mokra Gora offer as the destination. Subjects graded these elements by five-point Likert scale, with grades ranging from 1 (extremely unsatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied).

Methods used in this paper were questionnaires, direct (personal) contact with Nature Park management, local population, personal insights, photographing etc. Those were classic "field research" with the aim to obtain as much relevant data as possible "at the spot". Besides fieldwork, data were gathered using different written sources (laws, strategies, acts, programs, scientific papers, books, magazines) and electronic sources (Internet browsing, multimedia presentations etc).

RESULTS

The socio-demographic data of respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents structure
Tabela 1. Struktura ispitanika

Total number of respondents/ <i>Ukupan broj ispitanika</i>	50
Gender/<i>Pol</i>	
female/ <i>žene</i>	54%
male/ <i>muškarci</i>	46%
Age/<i>Godine</i>	
16-25	26%
26-35	36%
36-45	20%
46-55	8%
56-65	6%
65 and more/ <i>i više</i>	4%
Education level/<i>Obrazovanje</i>	
Primary school/ <i>Osnovna škola</i>	6%
High school/ <i>Srednja škola</i>	44%
College/ <i>Viša škola</i>	18%
University/ <i>Fakultet</i>	28%
Master/doctoral degree / <i>Magistar, Doktor nauka</i>	4%
Daily spending/<i>Dnevna potrošnja</i>	
less than 30 €/ <i>manje od</i>	68%
31-50€	28%
more than 51€/ <i>više od</i>	4%

At the question from which country they come, most of subjects said Serbia (44 respondents), and from those, from Belgrade were 46%, from Vojvodina 31%, and from

other parts of Serbia 23%. Seven subjects were from abroad (USA, Italy, Slovenia, Australia and Montenegro). Survey has encompassed more women than men. If we compare their answers, we note that most of women came for the first time (32%) and that they plan to come again (44%). In male population, most were here between two and five times (28%) and 12% does not know whether they will come again. Due to age, a large percent of subjects were between 16 and 25 years of age (26%). This is a young category, people who are near the end of schooling or recently graduated, and therefore they are financially dependent and have no family. This is confirmed by the fact that 70% of young subjects said that they are spending less than 30 Euros during sojourn at the destination. In most cases, they come with friends or a partner, and reason to come was fun, relaxation and recreation, cultural facilities and new experiences.

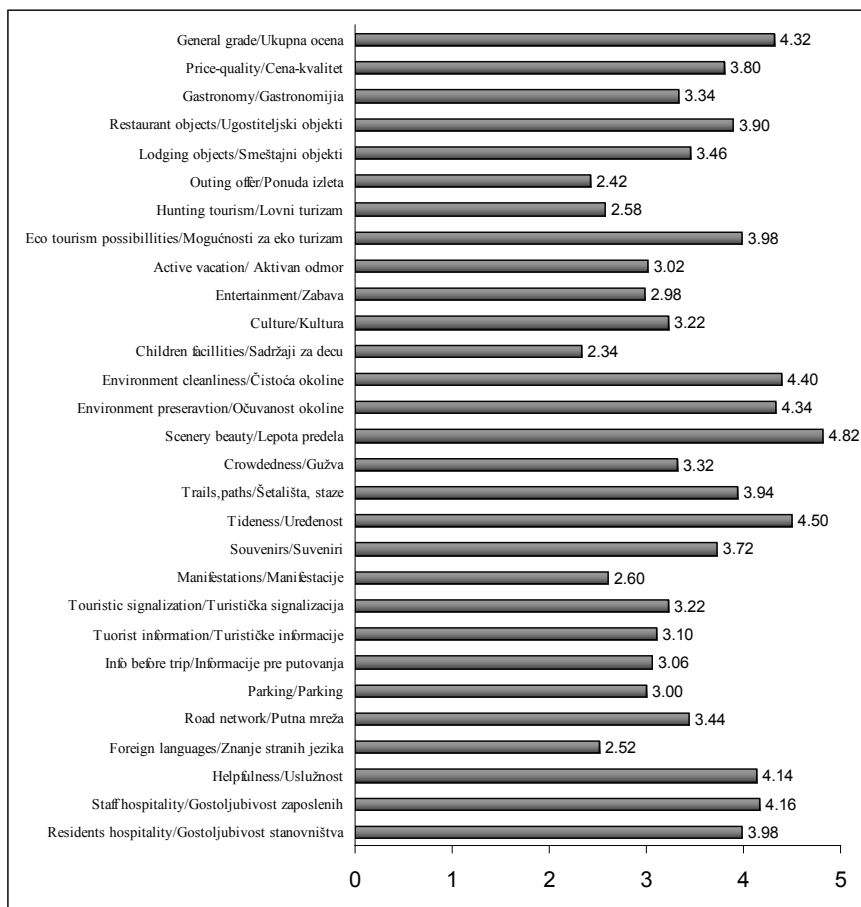
The next age group, and the most numerous one, was subjects between 26 and 35 years of age. According to statistics, these persons are financially independent and often have started a family. The most often travel with family or friends. In comparison to previous group, here more subjects spend more between 30 and 50 Euros (60%), while others spend less than 30 Euros. In most cases, they came because of nature beauty, relaxation and recreation. In analyzing subjects older than 35, it is notable that they are mostly first-time visitors to “Šargan-Mokra Gora” (63%). In most cases, they come with a spouse or with a whole family (children). They spend between 30 and 50 Euros (42%), while some spend more than 50 Euros (10%). From those respondents, 73% would come again to this destination. Reasons to visit these parts are well-preserved nature, climate and local gastronomy.

By analyzing answers in this survey, it was concluded that most subjects (68%) spend less than 30 Euros, and 28% spends between 30 and 50 Euros. Only 4% of subjects spend more than 50 Euros, and those were foreign tourists. As we said above, age group 36-45 years spends most, and after them those from 26-35 years. In addition, more women spend between 30 and 50 Euros (24%), while man said they spend less than 30 Euros at this destination (36%).

Education level of subjects did not have any relevance in this analysis. Share of every category is leveled, and only difference was regarding hunting activities, as it was indicated in previous research (Marković et al., 2011). All subjects with masters or doctoral degree were interested to come to hunt at this destination and they believe that it is possible to combine hunting and sustainable game management. Most subjects with high-school degree would not come to hunt at this destination (76%). At the question whether they would like to come again to “Šargan-Mokra Gora”, most subjects answered affirmatively (74%); 22% said they might come again, while 4% does not want to come here again. The arithmetic means of all answers to survey is shown in Graph 1. Results of investigation have shown that subjects consider geographical and touristic position of “Šargan – Mokra Gora” as very favorable destination. Relatively good infrastructure (3.44) nevertheless should be renewed and maintained. Tourist signalization is graded by 3.22 but further communication with subjects, especially foreign ones, revealed that certain info boards are written in Cyrillic letters only, which is a problem for strangers. Most subjects arrived by a car, and parking lots (3) are located at a small area, which is a downside, having in mind that most visitors come by private cars and are daily excursionists. Nature beauty (4.82), preservation (4.34) and cleanliness (4.4) were graded quite high. Nature beauty is also one of main reasons that tourist come to these parts. Other positively graded elements were amicability of touristic staff and of

local population. Helpfulness is also high (4.14), but knowledge of foreign languages in staff received rather low grade.

Poor transportation connections (city busses) and low cooperation with travel agencies led to conclusion that very small number of tourists arrives through travel agencies. Busses operate several times a day, mostly to Višegrad and Sarajevo, and in transition they drop off tourists who use this type of transportation. Since there are no concrete activities and no outing in offer, outing activities offer within the destination itself has unfavorable tendency. There are a number of localities that can be used, because this Nature Park has natural and cultural characteristics promising development of different types of tourism (eco, sustainable, country, manifestation etc).



Graph. 1. Elements evaluation offered by respondents

Graf. 1. Ocena elemenata ponude od strane ispitanika

Possibilities for development of ecotourism were positively graded by subjects (3.48), while for hunting tourism grades were somewhat lower (2.58), as well as for active vacation possibilities (3.02).

Considerable cultural wealth may be additional, but also the main motive bringing tourists. Still, visitor satisfaction by presence and programs of manifestation at this

destination was graded poorly (2.6). Children facilities almost don't exist (2.34). Since most of survey subjects were middle-age pairs, they probably come with their children. Additional activities for them would most certainly complement and brought tourist offer of the destination to higher-level.

High grades are given to restaurant objects (3.9) and boarding objects (3.46). This destination got higher grades mostly because of relatively high number of various category objects, from plain village cottages to luxurious hotels and apartments. In addition, they are all unique: for instance, at Mečavnik there are no two identically decorated rooms.

Regarding price/quality ratio, average grade is 3.8. Most visitors are fascinated by natural beauties, but it is far from enough. For longer stay of tourists, it is necessary to form more ample offer with various attractive activities, and new facilities that will attract visitors and bring them back on this destination another time.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that visitors are generally satisfied with the elements identify in the destination. However, for longer stay of tourists, it is necessary to form more ample offer with various attractive activities, and new facilities that will attract visitors and bring them back on this destination another time. Regarding this matter, development of the "Šargan- Mokra Gora" Nature Park in a long-term, must be guided with the principles of sustainability and ecotourism – not only as perspective branch in tourism in this region, but also due to general values and tendencies to organize general economy recovery of the region, without consequences to environment, i.e. sustainable development based on ecotourism and complementary activities (agriculture, transport, commerce) (Ristić, 2006).

Need to redirect towards sustainable development, which may be identified to justified, coordinated, scientifically based and rationally based and attainable activities that would not interfere basic ecological relations in an area which should bear a mark of ecological quality and keep it for the sake of future generations, understands creating not only most favorable conditions for fulfillment of present and future needs of tourists, but also the needs of local population. At the same time, redirection from classic and always coveted mass tourism to ecotourism must not be organized by rejecting present systems but by gradual changes, improvements and refinements for better future.

Touristic potentials of this destination are not used enough. With improvements of transportation infrastructure, opening airport at Ponikve, including cattle-breeding huts to tourist offer, "Šargan- Mokra Gora" may become interesting for foreign visitors too. Increase of number of tourists will bring more jobs for local population too.

As a tourist destination, it must be strategically defined entirety, with characteristic elements. It is necessary to create distinct image of this destination which must fulfill demands of present world of globalization, but at the same time to be recognized by specific offers, shaped according to investigations and consideration of general and specific trends ad the tourist market (Armenski et al., 2009).

The knowledge of the needs and wishes of tourists is an essential input for a tourist destination to make marketing-related decision (Djeri et al., 2007). Modern tourists do not wish to use only the basic offer of a destination; they want individual or organized experience outside strict borders of predestined touristic localities (Djeri et al., 2007).

For that reason, there is even more need to emphasize need to exploit potential tourist offer of specific types of tourism within the Nature Park, which will create competitiveness of the destination itself, certainly with respect to principles of sustainable and eco tourism, since this area has not only local but also global importance, so the preservation of nature and of biodiversity must be the first priority.

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ZNAČAJ ZADOVOLJSTVA POSETILACA PARKA PRIRODE „ŠARGAN - MOKRA GORA”

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Izvod

Park prirode “Šargan - Mokra Gora” je turistička destinacija izuzetnih prirodnih vrednosti koja je i pored razvoja turističke delatnosti uspešla da sačuva potpunu autentičnost zbog koje je izuzetno atraktivna za domaće i inostrane posetioce . Cilj ovog