

PROTECTED AREAS: MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AS AN ASPECT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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***Abstract:** National parks and other protected areas globally are becoming increasingly important for biodiversity protection. However, strong tourism demand for sustainable nature-based products implies that protected areas have an important role to play. To achieve symbiosis between protection and tourism usage of protected areas a management approach should be adopted. IUCN protected areas categories are here examined together with problems of categorisation issuing from the mismatch of their names and management objectives with the focus on national parks. An overview of the protected areas coverage in the world, Europe and a narrower Balkans-surrounding region is given. Among conclusions reached is the availability of resources in the researched region for the development of international cross-border competitive clustered tourism based on protected areas.*

***Keywords:** differences, IUCN categories, management objectives, protected areas, sustainability, tourism*

Contemporary tourism trends

According to data published by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism in the world developed undisturbed from 2004 to mid-2008. The last year of the period was marked by turbulence and contrasts conditioned by very changeable and adverse developments in the global economy. It was followed by a decline in international tourist arrivals globally, so the drop of -3.9% which was the greatest since 2000, was recorded in 2009. According to UNWTO Barometer (January 2010), the year 2009 was the year of extreme crisis in tourism. As is typical for the periods of crises, travels were referred to destinations closer to home. Therefore, countries that represent a large share of total tourism demand in international tourism, such as China, Brazil and Spain, recorded an increase in domestic tourism in 2009.

Europe suffered from the effects of the same unfavourable development conditions as the world in general. At the beginning of the period, it had 396.2

million international tourist arrivals, while the number at the end of the period amounted to 562.8 million. Its share in world tourism fell from 57.5% in 2000 to 52% in 2013, and the average annual growth rate was about 2%.

Contemporary tourism concepts

Tourism globally is not characterized only by interchanging of more or less favourable circumstances and conditions for development. It is characterised by different concepts through which it becomes specific and directed, making the development of certain destinations easier and more successful, while others are left with issues for adaptation and survival. These new concepts are often in conflict with traditional trends, activities and habits with which it battles for supremacy.

One of these relatively new concepts is sustainability. However, the problem is that it is interpreted, understood and applied, depending on the point of view. Activities issuing from different interpretations are often opposing, contradictory and mutually annihilating.

Accordingly, there are numerous definitions of sustainability and sustainable development, as well as the sustainable development of tourism. However, in order to harmonize activities so that all can draw simultaneous benefits from the concepts, a generally accepted definition is necessary.

The term “sustainable tourism” is derived from the definition of sustainability which represents, as Weaver (2001, p. 10) cites the 1987 WCED definition, ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

The pillars of sustainable tourism development refer to environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects. In order to guarantee its long-term sustainability, balance must be established between the three dimensions. Thus, sustainable tourism should (*Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations A Guidebook*, 2004):

- “make optimal use of *environmental resources* that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity;
- respect the *socio-cultural authenticity* of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance;
- ensure viable, long-term *economic* operations, providing *socio-economic benefits* to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation”.

While this concept in tourism globally is viewed by many stakeholders as modern, there are still numerous those who cling to already acquired habits and make decisions and plan according to them. In order to avoid wasting resources in vain it is necessary to spread awareness and understanding of the essence of sustainability around the world.

One of the most recent phenomena in the tourism industry is a growing concern for, desire and efforts made to protect and preserve the environment of the planet. The international community has teamed up to celebrate the existence of the planet in 2010 as the UN International Year of Biodiversity. World tourism organization contributes with its efforts, one of which is World tourism day 2010. This day was dedicated to raising awareness about close relationship between tourism development and biodiversity protection. In his message for the 2010 World tourism day, Secretary-General, Mr. Rifai wrote that “the value of biodiversity for tourism is immeasurable. One of tourism’s greatest assets, the diversity of life on Earth causes millions of people to travel the world each year. Yet biodiversity, the intricate web of unique species and ecosystems that make up our planet, is at risk on a global scale. Demographic pressures and unsustainable human activities are causing irreversible biodiversity loss at an alarming rate. Recognizing the value of Earth’s natural capital to its long-term sustainability, the tourism industry is called upon to protect and sustainably manage biodiversity” (UNWTO News, 2010, p.14). In its long-term tourism predictions, UNWTO emphasizes the need to adopt sustainability principles in the process of the tourism development and characterizes it in the next two decades as responsible, competitive and insightful in terms of economic growth, social progress and environmental sustainability (*Tourism towards 2030, 2011*).

Biodiversity is a key element for the development of tourism, but the lack of awareness of the links between tourism development and biodiversity conservation is obvious. Negative impacts of tourism on the environment and biodiversity have already left deep scars on the planet. There are regions on the planet called hotspots “that harbour a great diversity of endemic species and, at the same time, have been significantly impacted and altered by human activities” (Meyers, et. al. 2000 in Christ, Hillel, Matus, & Sweeting, 2003, p. 3). They are useful for understanding the impact of tourism on biodiversity.

However, tourism can have a positive impact on the conservation and protection of biodiversity and exist with them in symbiosis through a sustainable approach to the development of tourism types such as ecotourism or alternative tourism. Ecotourism is a subcomponent within the field of sustainable tourism and represents primarily a sustainable version of tourism based on nature, and includes rural and cultural tourism elements, i.e. is based on the principles of sustainability (Wood, 2002; Black & Crabtree, 2007; Christ, Hillel, Matus, & Sweeting, 2003). As Honey (2002, p. 2) states, “nature

and adventure tourism focus on *what* the tourist or traveller is seeking... in contrast, ecotourism ... focuses on what the traveller does, plus the *impact* of this travel on both the environment and the people in the host country....positing that this impact should be positive". As such, ecotourism is closely related to the sustainability concept.

The above mentioned is especially important for destinations such as protected areas (including national parks), which are designated, managed and used based on sustainability principles.

Therefore, it can be concluded that despite the negative impact of the crisis on the global tourism market, there are also positive aspects. All economies need to devote themselves to correcting past mistakes in order to rise on competitiveness scale. The result is not only success of individual countries or destinations on the tourist market, but the development of strong and sustainable tourism sector, which as such can effectively contribute to full recovery and development of the world economy. What is particularly important is that it can encourage the development and prosperity especially in developing countries, which is essential for the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. Tourism in protected areas can contribute towards such goals as ensuring environmental sustainability (through biodiversity protection), reducing poverty (through increasing employment of local communities), education (through interpretative and educational role of sustainable tourism), global development partnership (through forming protection areas clusters or transnational systems).

General review of protected areas and national parks

In line with contemporary tourism trends and developments, number of protected areas in the world is growing. There were also changes in tourism needs and desires, i.e., the new profile of tourists, a new segmentation of the tourism market. Accordingly, there is a need for tourism which is directly dependent on the natural environment and biodiversity, as well as preserved cultural and historical resources. An increasing number of visitors to national parks is becoming a global phenomenon, and the parks are identified as the main attractions for visitors, both domestic and international. „Tourism focused on protected areas is increasing at a relatively greater rate within overall global growth” (Bushell & Eagles, 2007, p. xii).

Protected areas today are a part of the debate about the existence and management functions (Black and Crabtree, 2007). The traditional concept of protected areas, which implies minimum of population in the park is the 'preservationist' position that involves exclusion of human presence from protected areas. The second position is the 'users' one, and its essence is that protected areas exist to be used to meet the needs of people.

Tourism is the embodiment of this dilemma, but it would, with proper management which rests on sustainability principles, could be a key to reconciliation. If excessively used, protected areas in the future will not exist, and if not used, they would miss a number of positive implications: for tourists (meeting needs, education, etc.), for local communities (general well-being, socio-economic benefits) and the area management (sufficient revenue to cover the costs) etc.

Finally, in order to plan appropriately to achieve benefits for all stakeholders in protected areas tourism, it is necessary to increase their awareness of the necessity of keeping a regular and accurate statistics on tourism in protected areas. However, there is little data available on interest and attitude towards tourism based on nature and eco-tourism. There is no global inventory of park tourism (Eagles & McCool, 2002, p. 21), which results in an incomplete understanding of the scope, impact and trends visit. At the same time, it is an obstacle in conducting research, so conclusions arising cannot be completely reliable.

Classification of protected areas

Protected areas represent oases of environmental protection, plant and animal diversity and complex ecosystems at tourism destinations. Contemporary trends in global tourism serve as a strong foundation which encourages and supports protected areas creation and existence. The principles of sustainability are those underlying their establishment and management.

The protected area is a term for which there are multiple definitions. IUCN defines a protected area as (Chape et.al, 2003, p. 2):

“An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means”.

Around the world, the role of protected areas is defined by very different conceptions of national and regional protected areas. There are a large number of protected areas of wide and often confusing variety. In order to increase transparency and comparability of protected areas on international level, and with regard to their objectives, in 1978 IUCN provided the scale of internationally recognized categories of protected natural resources, which includes a standardized set of terminology and definitions. The present system of categories was first applied in the UN list of protected areas in 1997. Although this system has received international recognition, it is not legally binding and its implementation is entirely voluntary. IUCN classification of protected areas is given in Table 1.

Table 1: IUCN Management Categories of Protected Areas

Category	
Category I	<i>Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area:</i> Protected area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection.
Category Ia	<i>Strict Nature Reserve:</i> Protected area managed mainly for science.
Category Ib	<i>Wilderness Area:</i> Protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection.
Category II	<i>National Park:</i> Protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation
Category III	<i>Natural Monument:</i> Protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features.
Category IV	<i>Habitat/Species Management Area:</i> Protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention.
Category V	<i>Protected Landscape/Seascape:</i> Protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation
Category VI	<i>Managed Resource Protected Area:</i> Protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems.

Source: Eagles, P. F., & McCool, S. F.(2002). *Tourism in national parks and protected areas: Planning and management.* New York: CABI Pub., p. 10 and UNEP-WCMC. (2008). *State of the world's protected areas 2007: An annual review of global conservation progress.* Cambridge:UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, p.5

“Protected area designations used by countries are not necessarily directly comparable across countries because of potentially different legislative regimes. Over 1,000 different terms are known to be used around the world to designate protected areas” (Chape et.al, 2003, p. 11). This does not mean that each of these international systems for determining the category is wrong. They actually emphasise protected areas’ value if based on determined management objectives, together with the importance of the application of IUCN categories.

However, the categories system was introduced mainly for the purpose of standardisation of descriptions of what constitutes a particular protected area. “The names of all protected areas except the ones in category II were chosen to relate, more or less closely, to the main management objective of the category” (Dudley, 2008, p. 11). There lies a source of somewhat of confusion. Namely, the term “National Park” was in use long before the categories system, while within the system it denotes large protected areas under category II. Partly due to that, a variety of national parks globally have very different aims from those defined under category II, and are categorized under other IUCN categories.

Protected areas coverage

Global protected areas coverage

Increase of awareness of the need to preserve the environment and the movement towards a sustainable and responsible behaviour also occurs among stakeholders in the tourism industry - state governments, public and private

sector. This is demonstrated through a significant increase in the number of protected areas in the world.

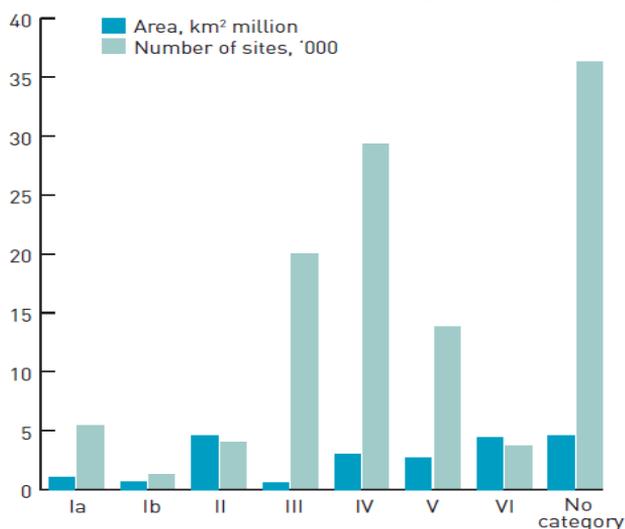
Since the establishment of the first national park in the world, Yellowstone in the United States in 1872, the number of protected areas has increased significantly. A special effort has been invested in it over the last three decades when the number of sites and their total area increased significantly.

The increase in planet coverage by protected areas is an indicator of enhanced efforts by governments and society in general invested in the protection of space, with the intention to achieve long-term conservation of biodiversity and associated ecosystem and cultural values.

However, there are large discrepancies in protected areas between countries. Only about 45% of the estimated 236 countries and territories in the global database on protected areas have more than 10% of protected land areas, and only 14% have more than 10% of protected marine areas.

The largest number of protected areas is managed according to guidelines other than those that are assumed under IUCN categories, with that number exceeding 35,000 locations. According to IUCN classification, the largest number of protected areas is under category IV, while the smallest number of protected areas of category Ib. Largest surface area covered is under category II - national parks - although they are not numerous. However, this fact is not surprising since the national parks, in terms of the objectives to which they are managed, are designated in order to protect larger areas. Protected areas of category VI also occupy large surfaces, and given the management objectives that allow the greatest degree of human activities, they are of great importance for tourism (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Protected areas by IUCN management category, 2007



Source: UNEP-WCMC, (2008). *State of the world's protected areas: an annual review of global conservation progress*. Cambridge: UNEP-WCMC, p. 17

Research on nature tourism has shown that as much as 50% of the total travel market wants to visit a natural area during a trip, which might include a short day stop in a national park (Wood, 2002, p. 19). According to an extremely rough estimate made in as back as 1997, the world's ecotourism arrivals were expected to represent 7% of tourism market in 1998, while almost a double number was predicted for 2010. To this, a significant number of domestic visitors to natural areas should be added (Lindberg in Wood, 2002, p. 20). 2013 Travel Guard survey of travel agents (Center for Responsible Travel, 2016) found that "24% of those who responded noted that interest in 'green' travel is currently the highest it's ever been in the last 10 years, and 51% reported that interest has remained constant throughout this period".

Protected areas coverage: Europe

Europe has a long history of establishing and caring for national parks. Among the first national parks ever established are parks in Sweden where nine national parks were formed at once in 1909. However, among European countries there are still plenty of those in which the percentage of protected areas is below 10%. The situation is not as dire in the whole region of Europe. There are many countries that have put 10% to 25% of the territory of the state under protection, and there are those who protect their natural heritage to a greater extent, 25% -50%.

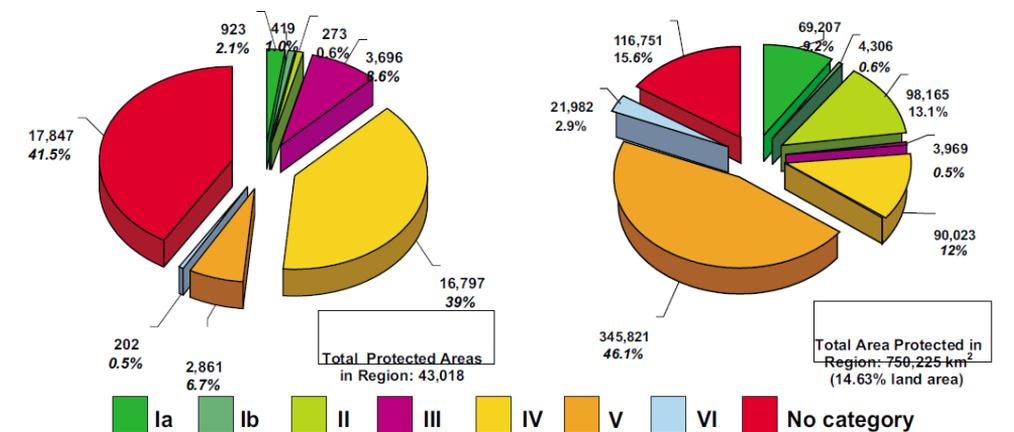
The United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) provides lists of protected natural areas. In order to gain insight into the increase in the number of protected areas in Europe, a comparative report of two reviews performed in 2003 and 2008 are given.

According to (Chape, Blyth, Fish, & Spalding, 2003, p. 30), in Europe, according to the 2003 review, 48,018 sites were protected covering total area of 750.225 km², as shown in the figures 2 and 3. The predominant category in terms of the number of protected sites is category IV with 16,797 locations and makes up 39% of the total number of protected areas. However, in terms of the surface designated significantly prevalent category is category V with 46.1% of protected areas (345.821 km²).

Regarding category II (national parks), in Europe in 2003 there were 273 protected parks, which represented 0.6% of the total number of protected areas. In terms of surface covered, their role is much higher - 13.1% of the total surface of protected areas, covering 98.165 km².

It is noted that as many as 41.5% of the total number of protected areas in Europe remained outside the IUCN categories, while their share in the total area is only 15.6%, which suggests that these are protected areas of a smaller surface coverage.

Figure 2: Number and percentage distribution of categories and non-categorised protected areas - Europe



Source: Chape, S., S. Blyth, L. Fish, P. Fox and M. Spalding (compilers) (2003), *2003 United Nations List of Protected Areas*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK and UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge, UK, p. 40

According to review conducted by UNEP-WCMC (2008, p.19), Europe is covered with a 6.48 million km² of protected areas, accounting for 27.12% of the total surface of protected areas in the world. Within the numbers, 13.79% are terrestrial protected areas and 6.57% marine. From the review of protected areas carried out in 2003 to the one of 2008, the number of protected areas increased more than 9 times. This is an indicator of the extent to which the society is struggling to halt the loss of biodiversity in the world.

Protected areas coverage: regional perspective

Care about preserving the environment, the desire for development that does not endanger the it and awareness of the need for responsible behaviour that will lead to sustainability of biodiversity on the planet and the well-being of local communities inhabiting the areas are current occurrences in the global society and tourism as one of the phenomena that depict it. Also, the protection of certain species and ecosystems which are an integral and inseparable part, cannot be managed within national borders, or be the result of inadequate management and mismatches of management activities in two or more neighbouring countries whose territories are covered by a certain natural areas.

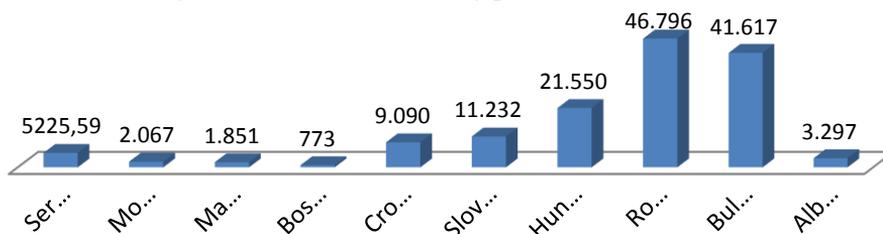
In order to answer whether the aforementioned concerns, wishes and awareness spread evenly and whether their expansion in one country affects the expansion in those around it, and whether in this respect countries in the region surrounding Serbia affects one another the data provided by the World Database of Protected Areas (WDPA) is here used. It should be noted that these data include protected areas that are nationally designated in the observed

countries, but that are at the same time registered in the WDPA. However, that number is even higher if the areas protected by the countries which are not entered into the database are taken into account.

Based on the analysis of the situation in individual countries in the region (based on WDPA data), it can be concluded that Romania and Bulgaria have the largest number of protected areas. At the same time, these two countries have the highest terrestrial surface covered by the protected areas.

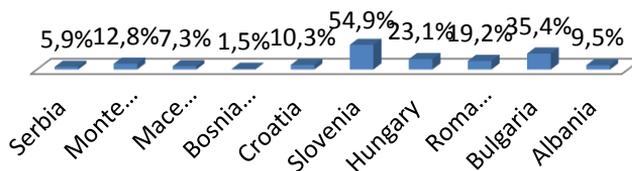
The situation in Serbia is the same as in the former Yugoslavian countries, and all of these are in a worse position in relation to Romania and Bulgaria. As seen in the figure 4, if the countries of former Yugoslavia are observed, Serbia is on the third place in terms of the surface of the territory that was declared for a specific category of protected areas. Among them Slovenia excels.

Figure 4: Total area of country protected (km²)



Source: Adapted from data available at WDPA online database www.ibat-alliance.org (Retrieved in August 2014)

Figure 5: Percentage of territory under state protection in the region



Source: Adapted from data available at WDPA online database (Retrieved in August 2014)

Countries that have the highest percentage of its territory designated for protection and specific objectives of management in the observed group are Slovenia, followed by Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. Slovenia is also one of the countries that have successfully developed forms of tourism based on natural and cultural (protected) resources by which it has become recognizable. Among the countries that have not met the Millennium Development Goal to achieve the coverage of the national territory by protected areas in a minimum volume of 10% by 2012 are Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania (figure 5).

Given the fact that almost all the observed countries border each other, the establishment of protected areas which cover the territory of at least two neighbouring countries can be one of the solutions for increasing the number and surface covered by protected areas in the region. This may imply declaring new, expansion of the existing and uniting protected areas that currently exist independently of one another in two or more neighbouring countries. Joint management by two or more countries involved could apply protection objectives more comprehensively, as well as jointly approach promotion of areas relevant for tourism and recreational purposes.

In terms of the number of protected areas on the observed countries' territories, IUCN categories III and IV prevail. Of the 10 countries observed, in only two of them category I prevails, in one country that is category II, while in 5 countries categories III, IV and V are most numerous.

Bearing in mind management objectives by which the purpose and existence of a protected area is determined, it can be concluded that most countries in the region devote its protected areas, in addition to biodiversity protection, to recreational and tourism activities. This implies greater interaction between people and the environment than management categories I or II permit (Dudley, 2008, p. 14-23).

IUCN system protected areas categories' names vs. management objectives

World's first protected area was named "national park". In times that followed, designated protected areas started bearing different names. Attempts to clarify situation and bring order into protected areas naming started during the '30s, while IUCN and WCPA started introducing protected areas classification in the '70s. IUCN categories applied today are used with diverse purposes such as planning, setting regulations, and negotiating land and water uses (Dudley, 2008, p. 3). Various relevant management approaches are accordingly derived.

However, since the name of "national park" was used prior to the classification which indicates exact purpose of existence and protected area management approaches, along with the fact that the application of IUCN categories is not compulsory and that each country reserves the right to their own interpretation of its natural resources, there is a disagreement in how protected areas are named with the objectives and management approaches that are applied.

In the framework of the aforementioned classification, national parks belong to the category II. The analysis of compliance of the name "national park" with the IUCN category to which it belongs in the neighbouring countries of the region is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Compliance of the name “national park” with the appropriate IUCN category – region

Country	Number of protected areas named „national park”	Number of protected areas that belong to IUCN category II	Number of national parks that correspond to IUCN category II
Albania	14	14	13
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	1	1
Bulgaria	3	3	3
Montenegro	4	4	4
Croatia	8	7	7
Hungary	6	5	5
Romania	13	13	11
Slovenia	1	1	1
Serbia	5	2	2
Macedonia	3	3	3

Source: Adapted from data available at WDPA online database (Retrieved in January 2011)

In as many as 6 out of the 10 countries researched, non-compliance of categories exists. It means that certain national parks are managed by objectives that differ from those implied by IUCN category II, or that some areas that bear a different name are operated in accordance to the framework of category II.

As an illustration of the mismatch of the names and management aims and objectives along with the purpose of designation of various protected areas, Serbia can be given, according to the report on the state of the environment in Serbia (Izveštaj o stanju životne sredine, 2009, p. 158) and WDPA database. Namely, out of five protected areas bearing the name “national park”, only two are managed as IUCN category II. Those are national parks Tara and Šar-Mountains. One belongs to category IV (national park Djerdap) and two to category V (national parks Kopaonik and Fruška gora).

Conclusion

Analysis of differences in the purposes of establishment and management objectives of protected areas (together with approaches they result from) was based on a comparative analysis of different categories objectives provided by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) presented by Dudley (2008, p. 13-24) and its global protected areas database.

Given management objectives should be taken into account during the process of planning and decision-making concerning tourism development, both at micro-level of administration of a single national park, and at the macro-level of strategic decision-making essential to the development of tourism at a country level. They represent the basis for forming international, cross-border competitive clustered tourism based on protected areas.

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