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ASSESSMENT MODEL OF NATURE-BASED TOURISTIC MOTIVES IN THE OVČAR-KABLAR GORGE (SERBIA)

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Abstract: One of the initial stages of the tourist development is the assessment of the elements or the entire area in order to identify priorities that will continue to be presented and economically valorised through specific measures and activities. This is possible to achieve by using different models of evaluation with a tendency to more qualitative characteristics express quantitatively. The idea is to develop a universal model that can be applied to different areas in order to be comparable with each other, so decision-makers knew exactly which one of the areas has greater potential to develop tourism. This paper presents the model of evaluation of nature-based touristic motives that was created by combining several adapted methodologies. The proposed model is applied to the area of Ovčar-Kablar Gorge (Western Serbia). After the process of evaluation, it turns out that natural elements of Ovčar-Kablar Gorge have moderate importance to the development of tourism and that with concrete measures in the field of nature protection and planning of the tourist area, this status can be improved.

Key words: tourism, tourism valorisation, nature-based touristic values, Ovčar-Kablar Gorge

Introduction

Tourist valorisation is a complex assessment of natural, anthropogenic, organizational and other elements of a tourist destination. In terms of the limited resources dedicated to the development, it finds its purpose highlighting areas of importance for the maximizing positive and minimizing negative effects of that development. Tourist destinations are competing and tourism demand is impermanent and more sophisticated. Considering the needs of the local population, the protection of natural and anthropogenic values, infrastructural capacities, organizational and legislative support, it is clear how the process of evaluation and ranking of tourist destinations is extensive and complex. This is a task that because of its multidisciplinary nature requires a commitment of a team of specialists from several different fields.

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The paper presents an assessment model which is the sublimation of the earlier research, but above all, experience and knowledge of the authors. The model is applied to the area of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge, on the assessment of natural tourist values which are assumed to have a moderate impact on the development of tourism. The aim was to isolate some of the indicators, but also to draw attention to some shortcomings and omissions, especially in the field of environmental protection and insufficiently enforced regulations. Scope of the evaluation is proposed for each indicator, and the marks for the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge were given by the authors, so that in the specific case one can monitor application of the model. When the dominant values are defined precisely and clearly, as well as the basic priorities in the future, then the way for the organization and promotion of various forms of tourism is paved. It is necessary to note that this is the issue that the institutions of international rank are dealing with by hiring a team of experts from different fields who work on data collection and processing, separation of key indicators and developing and improving the models of evaluation and categorization. After years of discussions, forums and conferences, the ideal solution has still been searched for as well as the indicators that would numerically express the value of a space and its elements. So, the model proposed in this paper cannot be considered as final, but it should be regarded as a basis that can and should be further developed and adapted.

Many authors dealt with the issue of evaluation of tourist values (Faulkner, 1997; Bjeljac, Ćurčić & Brankov, 2012b; Bjeljac, Brankov, Jovičić, Ćurčić & Terzić, 2012a; Nikolić, 2006). Great contribution to the methodology of tourismological valuation gave Hilary du Cros (2000; 2001) who oriented to the assessment of cultural tourism values. There are many studies about natural tourist values (Bjeljac et al., 2012a; Bjeljac et al., 2012b).

The special model is designed for the geoheritage areas applied by Vujičić, Vasiljević, Marković, Hose, Lukić, Hadžić & Janićević (2011), based on models that were developed by Reynard, Fontana, Kozlik & Scapozza (2007) and P. Pereira, D. Pereira & Caetano Alves (2007). The model of tourismological valuation presented in this paper combines the above mentioned adaptations of methodologies, taking into account proposals given by Stanković (2008) and Nikolić (2006). The proposed model is more complex as it includes the valuation of certain indicators of sustainable tourism development given in the guide of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2004).

Current state of nature-based touristic motives

The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is part of the border between high Šumadija in the north and Dragačevo and Starovlaško-raška highlands in the south (Figure 1). In terms of administration, it belongs to the municipalities of Čačak and Lučani. Ovčar spa is the only settlement in the gorge. The second important travel route in Serbia, after road Belgrade-Niš, and the most important parallel roadway connecting eastern and western parts of the country on Kraljevo-Užice relation leads along the Zapadna Morava River valley (Popović, 1996).

The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge was carved by the Zapadna Morava River, building a special natural phenomenon, meander loops between the two different landscape mountains Kablar, steep, almost vertical cliffs and mild slopes of Ovčar overgrown with forest vegetation. A special characteristic of the gorge is the thermal mineral springs of Ovčar spa (Popović, 1996; Stanković, Protić & Miljković, 1991; Stanković, 2005).

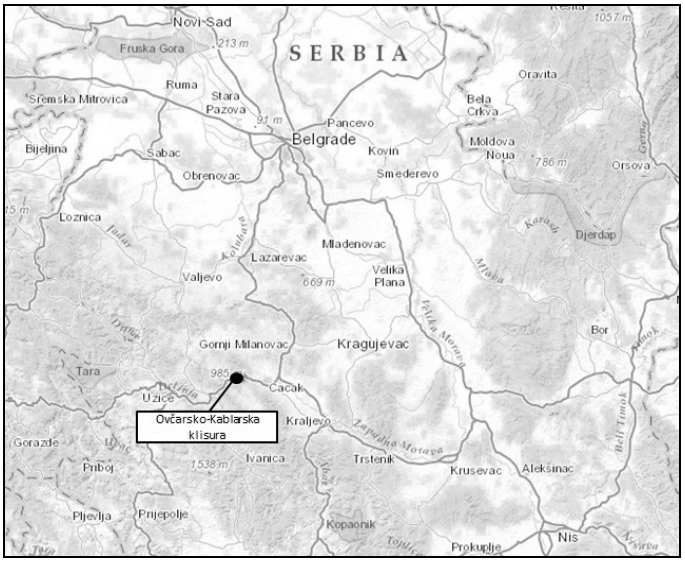

Figure 1. Geographical position of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge in Serbia

(Source: www.bestofserbia.rs)

In the study of protection that was made in 1998, the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge was proposed to be protected as the natural good of I category (natural good of great importance). The protection regime of the III degree has been established in this area. The protection regime of the II degree is established at six locations

(Branojevac-Debela gora, Banjski potok, Koronjski do, Ovčar-Bjeličje, Dugi do-Selečka kosa and Rapailovača-Jovanje) by the Spatial Plan for Special Purpose Areas for the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge.

The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge has undergone major transformations in the 20th century due to the bursting of the route of the road and railway junction and the construction of dams with the intention of use of hydro-potential of the Zapadna Morava River (construction of artificial lakes: Međuvršje and Ovčar-Kablar Lake). Uncontrolled construction of weekend cottages is present along the coast. The natural look of the gorge is altered significantly, natural environment degraded and wildlife at risk (Ugrinov, Stojanov & Komatina-Petrović, 2013).

One of the busiest main roads is passing through the gorge. Except that there are problem areas on the asphalt road where traffic accidents are regularly occurring, transport of dangerous goods, vehicle exhaust and noise represent a risk and significantly impair the environment and peace. There are increasing concentrations of lead, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides in the air on this section.

Artificial reservoirs, Ovčar-Kablar Lake and Međuvršje, are largely overwhelmed with the great amount of hazardous waste from industrial plants, sewage networks and cottage complexes on the coast. In the basin of the Zapadna Morava upstream of the gorge there are the municipalities of Užice (78,598 inhabitants), Ivanjica (32,516 inhabitants), Požega (29,423 inhabitants) and Lučani (21,267 inhabitants) and numerous factories (Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia, 2012). The study of physical and chemical composition of the water of the Zapadna Morava was conducted in 2004 at two locations in the gorge and showed poorer water quality in relation to the regulated characteristics of the II category watercourse to which the Zapadna Morava should belong by substantial part of its course, given the level of saprobity. The analysis shows that during most of the year the water is contaminated with ammonia, but occasionally nitrite and phenol concentrations are higher than regulated, and the quality of water is approaching the III category (Spasojević, Marković, Rafailović & Ribić-Zelenković, 2005). At the beginning of the 21st century, there has repeatedly been a massive fish kills in the Zapadna Morava and its tributaries (Skrapež, Čemernica, Ibar, etc.), as well as natural disasters (spills of ammonia in the river Bjelica and pollution of the Djetinja (Milijašević & Jojić-Glavonjić, 2009). There is small number of plants for waste water treatment: some are in the initial stage of construction, while others are neglected and out of order, and some operate only partially, while

there are illegal dumps at several places in the watershed of the Zapadna Morava.

The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is the habitat of rare and relict species, but a considerable part of the forest vegetation goes for undergrowth and devastated forests from uncontrolled logging, which is why the erosion of land took hold in many sectors through the gorge. The introduction of some invasive species (black locust, black pine) greatly changed the conditions of ecosystems and suppressed autochthonous vegetation. Natural rarity registered in the Red Book of Flora of Serbia is a Grey meadow-sweet (Lat. *Spiraea cana*), and all types of orchids that grow in the gorge are protected under the International Convention on Trade of Endangered Plant and Animal Species. The riverbanks are degraded in vegetation due to human influence with the occurrence of wetland vegetation and expressed eutrophication at a substantial part of the water surface of the lake in the gorge.

According to Marković and Veljović (2005), ichthyologic composition of the water flow through the gorge is caused by construction of artificial reservoirs, planned and unplanned stocking, droughts, floods, flooding and pollution of water, and the most numerous fish species are low valued (the so-called trash fish). The best studied animal group in the area of the gorge is birds of which 54 species are of international importance, and since 2000 the gorge has been on an international list of important bird areas (Important Bird Area - IBA) with the sign A1. It is about the kind of the Pygmy cormorant (Lat. *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*), which is on the Red List of IUCN.

Methodology

Tourist values represent a characteristic of a certain area and the starting point for tourism development. For this reason, the tourism valuation is initial stage and one of the key elements in the process of making master and strategic plans for development of tourism (Bjeljac et al., 2012a). The tourism valuation is a complex assessment of natural and anthropogenic values, i.e. all elements of space and society, important for the development of tourism. In order to properly access the process of tourist valuation, first it is necessary to make an inventory of tourism values, consider the state of the components of the environment, protection regime and the advantages and disadvantages of tourism. The aim is to express the tourist value quantitatively, which further complicates the complexity of the entire process, as many of the events and elements of space are difficult to quantify (Stanković, 2008; Stojanović & Stamenković, 2008).

The assessment model presented in the paper is not universal, but is adapted to the specific space and the requirements of the research, that is, the needs and possibilities for development of tourism activities, but it can serve as a basis for the valuation of similar space. A partial method has been presented referring to a group of elements of space, that is, the natural tourist motives, with the tendency to cover as many aspects in their valuation and express certain categories of values on the basis of numerical indicators.

After the inventory of natural tourist values and observing the state of the environment, organizational and legal regulations and plans for tourism development, the valuation process begins with a score of geographic, traffic and tourist position. The Table 1 shows an overview of indicators and rating system. Likert scale served as the basis of the system of assessment: 1 (very low attractiveness), 2 (low), 3 (medium), 4 (high) and 5 (very high attractiveness).

Table 1. Valorisation of position

Position	Indicators	What is evaluated?	Results
Geographical	Centrality	Distance from the geographical centre of Serbia (1–5)	4
	Geographical surrounding	Uniqueness (1–5)	4
Traffic	Accessibility	The proximity of roads, the quality and frequency (1–5)	4
	Infrastructure	Stage of development in the protected area (1–5)	2
Tourist	Local	Distance of nearest urban centers (1–5)	3
	National	Distance of main emissive centers in the country (1–5)	1
Total			18

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

Centrality is estimated on the basis of distance from the geographical centre of Serbia, which is in the village of Drača, near Kragujevac (Tadić, 2010). The more a tourist site occupies central position it is assumed that on average the closer it is to a larger number of the emitting points in our country. The diversity of natural tourist motives in the region considers a uniqueness of natural resource at the national level, that is, whether in a given spatial framework, there is a similar facility.

The traffic situation is viewed from the aspect of availability of infrastructure and construction in the protected natural resource. In order that a tourist value gets its transaction value in the market, it must be traffic accessible to travellers and tourists. In this respect, better position has the values that are on the roads of

greater importance, higher rank and degree of development, as well as on busy routes. On the other hand, since it is a protected natural area, a large frequency of traffic may undermine the original environment, so the development of transport infrastructure and traffic on the whole territory of the protected natural resource must be strictly controlled.

Travel position (distance from the centres of dispersion) was observed in the local environment and national levels, as this area of exceptional importance is of local and national level, to a lesser extent international level. Distance from the nearest urban centres (Čačak, Lučani, Požega and Gornji Milanovac) was evaluated as follows: mark 1 — the distance over 30 km, mark 2 — distance of 15–30 km, mark 3 — distance of 5–15 km, mark 4 — distance 1–5 km and mark 5 — the distance is less than 1 km. Distance from major national generating centres (Cities of Belgrade and Novi Sad) was evaluated as follows: mark 1 — distance of over 100 km, mark 2 — distance of 50–100 km and mark 3 — distance of 30–50 km, mark 4 — distance of 15–30 km and mark 5 — the distance is less than 15 km. The justification for this kind of grading system is the fact that the natural tourist motives are of interest primarily to meet recreational needs. The quality of such tourist movements is a small radius of travel. Recreational need on weekends, on holidays or big vacations meets first in those destinations which are around 15 minutes to an hour on foot or by car from the place of residence (Table 1). Natural elements of space are sorted into several categories and their method and the grading system is shown in the Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2. Valorisation of geomorphologic tourist values

Indicators	What is evaluated?	Results
The variety of forms	The existence of various forms of relief in the protected natural area (1–5)	4
Individuality	The uniqueness of the relief forms (1–5)	3
Attractiveness of the landscape	The overall aesthetic significance of the area (1–5)	5
Scientific and cultural significance	Landforms that are geoheritage or that are associated with historical events and cultural heritage (1–5)	4
Risks	Erosion, ravines, landslides (1–5)	3
	Total	19

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

The diversity of forms of relief was evaluated in terms of representation of geomorphologic forms that have a scientific and tourist importance.

Individuality is regarded as a function of the number of identical forms of relief, and the more identical values in the same area, their attractiveness reduces because they lose property of curiosity. The attractiveness of the landscape is assessed on the basis of aesthetic impact a certain space leaves. If such areas are finding their place in the educational and artistic forms, then they have their scientific and cultural significance. The risk of natural disasters refers primarily to the erosion and ravines (Table 2).

Table 3. Valorisation of hydrological tourist values

Indicator	What is evaluated?	Results
phenomena and objects in the riverbed	Rapids, waterfalls, whirlpools, lakes (1–5)	3
Comercial buildings in the riverbed	Hydroelectric power plants, mills (1–5)	3
Quality of water	Established class of water (1–5)	2
Transparency of water	Water turbidity and the presence of hydrophilic vegetation in the coastal zone (1–5)	1
Floods	The degree of regulation of river flow through the gorge (1–5)	2
Springs	Number and abundance (1–5)	4
Thermomineral springs	Number (1–5)	2
Usage of thermomineral water	Therapeutic, recreational and economic purposes (1–5)	3
	Total	20

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

The second column in the Table 3 indicates the existence and number of such objects. Water quality is assessed according to the established classes, and river water that belongs to the first category receives the highest rating. Transparency can be numerically expressed, but it is enough to have an insight into the degree of turbidity of water. Transparent and clear waters have the highest degree of attractiveness. When unregulated river flows, there is a possibility of flooding and destruction of coast and vegetation, and they are less attractive for tourism development. The number and abundance of springs of drinking and mineral water is another indicator that contributes to the tourist attraction, while the utilization of thermomimneral waters is significant for therapeutic, economic and recreational purposes (Table 3).

Table 4. Valorisation of biogeographical tourist values

Indicators	What is evaluated?	Results
Relict and endemic species	Existence and number (1–5)	3
Endagered species	Existence of endangered species and abundance of species registered in the Red Book (1–5)	2
Speciaes of international importnace	Habitat of protected species on a global level (1–5)	2
Ichtiofauna	Opportunities for the development of hunting and fishing (1–5)	3
	Total	10

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

Endemic and endagered plant and animal species increase attractivness of the area. Opportunities for the development of fishing are observed in terms of the number and importance of fish species (Table 4). It would be desirable for the indicators proposed in the Tables 2, 3 and 4 to continue to develop methods of numerical grading, but for now it can be made only if the valorisation of space approaches within the broader reference system. It is impossible to establish a universal rating system observing only one space.

Table 5. Valorisation of ecological elements

Indicators	What is evaluated?	Results
Category of protection	According regimes of protection I, II and III (1–5)	4
Degradation	Degree of degradation of natural tourist values (1–5)	2
Legal and official standards	Laws and spatial plans (1–5)	2
Measures	Security services and the sanctioning of illegal behavior (1–5)	2
	Total	10

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

With regard to the regulations set forth by the Environmental Protection Act (Official Gazette of RS, no. 88/10, 2010), controlled development of tourism activities is allowed in the III category of the natural resources. At the natural resources of the II category scientific and educational activities are permitted, and the assessment system must be harmonized with the possibilities of the tourism activities development. In this case the area of the I category would get mark 1, the area of the II category gets mark 2, the area of the III category receives mark 3, the area with combined protection regime gets the mark 4 or 5 because it allows the development of tourism and related activities that can have tourism character. Legal norms relate to the existence of planning documents that define and regulate the land use in a given area. The ideal conditions would

exist if detailed plans were made for land use and if they were properly implemented (Table 5).

Table 6. Valorisation of organisational elements of tourist offer

Indicators	What is evaluated?	Results
The degree of integration in tourist products and promotions	Recognisability of local, regional, national importance, on the Balkan peninsula and at the international level (1–5)	2
Accomodation	Capacity and level of equipment in accordance with the ambiance (1–5)	3
Other infrastructure	Walking, cycling and fishing trails, swimming pools, sports facilities (1–5)	4
Degree of organization of tourism offer	Guiding services, diversity offers, events and events based on natural attractions (1–5)	4
Involvement of the private sector	Planned investments in the development of tourism offer (1–5)	2
	Total	15

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

Explanations for organisational indicators are presented in Table 6. Justification for the introduction of this set of indicators in the model is the fact that they largely determine the status and involvement of natural tourist values in the tourist offer. The quality of organisational elements is evaluated according to the author's estimation.

Table 7. Summary assessment of natural tourist values

Elements of model	Extence of grades	Total
Position	6–30	18
Geomorfological attractions	5–25	19
Hydrological attractions	8–40	20
Biogeographical attractions	4–20	10
Ecological elements	4–20	10
Organisational elements	5–25	15
Total	32–160	92

Source: Made by the authors of the paper, 2014

Under the proposed model, the minimum number of points that natural tourist values may get in a given area is 32, and a maximum is 160 (Table 7). In order to better comprehend the significance of tourism development, it is necessary to allocate five categories by applying Sturges rule: $k = 1 + 3.32\log N$, where k is the number of categories, which will be 5 in this case, and N is the total number of units together or 160−32= 128 (Đolević & Tošić, 2008). When the difference between the maximum and minimum values is divided by the number of

categories, we get the scope of each category: i = (160−32)/5=25.6. On the basis of this, we can extract the following categories and assess the significance of natural tourist values in the development of tourist activities:

- Insignificant: 32–57.5
- Small: 57.6–82.9
- Medium: 83–108.5
- Large: 108.6–133.9
- Exceptional: 134–160.

This is an important final phase of the methodological and theoretical part of the tourist valuation for prioritization of tourism development, in order that tourist values get their traffic i.e. economic value through the implementation of concrete measures and activities.

Results and discussion

The position of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is assessed in the Table 1. Mark 4 is provided for indicators relating to the geographical position. The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is situated near Kragujevac and the geographical centre of Serbia, observed at the national level. As it is unique tourist value in the Morava District, in neighboring regions there are the gorges of the rivers Gradac and Uvac with similar attractions, this valuation is considered to be objective. The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is located on an important main road (but not near Corridor 10), and on the other side, development of transport infrastructure and traffic are not controlled through this protected natural area. The assessment manner of the traffic has been discussed previously (Table 1).

In the area of the gorge, except meanders, there are 10 caves, and consequences of contemporary geomorphologic processes can also be viewed (fluvial-denudation processes, talus deposition, erosion, cliffs), and therefore mark 4 is given for the variety of forms. Individuality is estimated worse because of the repetition of the same geomorphologic sites. Attractiveness of the landscape is assessed on the basis of the fact that on the territory of Čačak and the Morava District, the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is known touristic value, and its landscapes are the most common motives in advertising material. The Zapadna Morava meander loops (grafted or inherited) are often cited as an example of this geomorphologic phenomenon, a cave Kadjenica has its historical significance because of the events from the First Serbian Uprising. For this reason, mark 4 is given for this particular indicator. Erosions and ravines appear occasionally and are under control partially, so that mark 3 is considered to be an objective one (Table 2).

The famous waterfall was formed by deposition of tufa on Banjski potok in Ovčar spa. In the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge two hydroelectric powers and a small private hydroelectric power in Ovčar Spa were built. Apart from them, there are no other economic facilities. According to the regulations, water quality of the Zapadna Morava in the sector through the gorge should be such that it belongs to the second class, however the research show that water quality is deteriorating and that the individual sectors can be classified in category III. As the tourist value of the river is being assessed here, and given the quality of the river water, water sports and nautical activities can be organised here, while bathing is allowed very rarely. The water is turbid at the sector through the gorge, and the water surface of the lake cross-linked by hydrophilic vegetation, which prevents recreational water activities in coastal areas. The Zapadna Morava rarely overflows the river bed in this part, but the flooding occurs at the exit of the gorge. River flow is not adequately regulated and the coast is unregulated. In the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge 30 sources are found, but they are all of small capacity. Hot waters also rise in the very bed of the Zapadna Morava. The springs of thermo-mineral water in Ovčar spa are the most significant, with the temperature of 35 to 37.5 °C. Due to poor equipment and obsolete medical equipment, as well as a general lack of organization, the spa is now almost deserted, and the level of utilization of thermal mineral water is small. One part is used for heating, but this type of use did not become fully realised due to organizational and political disagreements (Table 3).

The existence of a large number of relict and endemic plant and animal species that are of national importance is also asserted in the area of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge. Grey meadow-sweet plant species is registered in the Red Book which is of national importance, and the pygmy cormorant birds are on the IUCN Red List. As for the fish stocks, less valued species are represented. In this area hunting and fishing are taking place, but they are very poorly organized and poorly controlled (Table 4).

When it comes to organizational factors, some other motives have greater importance at the national level, such as the Djerdap Gorge (so called Iron Gate), while at the regional and local level the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is one of the dominant tourist values. Tourist and catering establishments were built in Ovčar spa. Mountain hut with 66 beds and a camp with the capacity of 35 beds meet the present level of tourist demand. The most representative building of Ovčar spa was an outdoor swimming pool, near the camp, which is now closed and abandoned. In 2006, a wellness centre “Kablar” was opened with luxurious rooms, an indoor swimming pool with healing water, hot tubs, sauna and other recreational areas. The biggest problem in this area is wild and illegal

construction of weekend cottages on the tenth locations along the sector of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge, particularly on the shores of Lake Međuvršje, with a hundred objects of illegal spontaneous construction. There are arranged fishing paths, and in Ovčar spa training for divers is organised. Several hiking trails of varying difficulty are marked, while the cliffs of Kablar represent a natural Alpine training ground. Hiking Society "Kablar" organizes classes of climbing in winter and summer. In addition, a number of walking and cycling trails and trails for running are made. The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is also promoted as a destination for remote riding, kayaking, canoeing and paragliding adventures. The Tourist Organization of Čačak enables organized visits with a guide to all destinations in the gorge and organizes several manifestations during the year: New Year's climb to Kablar, meeting of hikers of Serbia, Ovčar-Kablar regatta and others. Parking lots are not regulated, there are several along the main road Užice-Čačak, while smaller waste dumps exist in a few places (Table 5).

In the area of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge combined protection regime is applied which allows the development of tourism and related activities, and mark 4 is given. It has already been discussed in a separate chapter about the degree of environmental degradation in the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge. The necessary documentation relating to the protection of the environment and development activities exists only on a general level and it is very scarce. A big problem in the preservation and protection of the environment is the lack of security guards, and the sanctions for illegal behaviour, such as the discharge of waste water into the river, disposal or uncontrolled cutting of forests are rarely implemented (Table 6).

The total score for the natural tourist values of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge is 92 (on a scale of 32–160) (Table 7). Classification into one of 5 categories (insignificant, small, medium, great and exceptional importance) could be carried out by normalization of the value on the scale of 1–5 according to the formula: Score = 1 + (92−32)/(160−32) * (5−1) and Score = 2.875. It has been shown that natural tourist motives have a medium importance for the development of tourism in the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge.

Conclusion

Contemporary lifestyles of postmodern information society increasingly emphasize the importance of recreational activities and generally all forms of tourism related to nature. Protected areas are particularly attractive, but it is necessary to provide a level of activity that will not jeopardize, but rather increase the attractiveness of the destination.

The Ovčar-Kablar Gorge as a protected area of exceptional importance is recognized as a destination for walking and cycling tours, as well as sporting events (regattas, kayaking, canoeing and paragliding adventures). There are arranged fishing trails for fishermen, training for divers, mountain climbing and other classes. On the other hand, this area is also significant for the history and culture because of the numerous religious sites of great beauty.

In order to determine priority areas of importance for the development of tourism, it is necessary to carry out the process of tourist valorisation. It is a complex process consisting of several stages, and the paper is concentrated on the development of model for assessing natural tourist values and applying the models to the specific area of the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge. It was started from the hypothesis that natural tourist motives of the gorge have a medium importance for the development of tourism, and the proposed model and rating system confirmed it.

Further research in this direction may involve a complex model of tourist valuation, which would include cultural values. When evaluating the importance of certain elements of the space for the development of tourism, it is necessary to bear in mind the mission of the bearers of development strategy, because all the elements of space do not have equal importance in the development of tourism. Water quality is important for recreational activities on the water, but this is not the case if development strategy goes in the direction of promoting events or religious tourism. A supplement to each model for tourist valuation should be the perception and awareness of tourists and locals because tourist area exists and is being developed in close relationship with them. The valuation and comparison of similar spaces form a network of models and provide an insight into the wider context of this methodological procedure, allowing its improving.

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