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STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE PROMOTION OF PROTECTED AREAS

SUMMARY

The research subject matter of this scientific paper is the application of the strategies for the promotion of protected areas in Montenegro. The hypothesis of the paper is that promotion strategies within the strategic marketing planning increase the awareness of the importance of continuous development of protected areas and thus directly affecting the promotion of the tourism and economy of Montenegro. Application of the strategies for the promotion of protected areas requires a strategic analysis, definition of marketing strategies, implementation of strategies, along with the awareness of the importance of monitoring and adaptation of the implemented strategies, as well as the control of the entire process of the marketing plan for the promotion of protected areas.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the impact of the marketing strategies for the promotion of protected areas on the development and positioning of protected areas while the specific objective is to point out to the importance of a continuous strategy of protected areas development in line with the modernization of these processes in the world. The paper will be based on the specific example of the National Park “Skadar Lake” as a tourist and ecological destination, with all the advantages and disadvantages, threats and opportunities, and plans for future development. Moreover, the paper will propose the strategies for the development of protected areas in Montenegro, obtained on the basis of the research on the attitudes of the target public through a survey and focus groups. Protected areas are important for the tourism of Montenegro, so the subject matter of this paper, in addition to scientific significance, has also a specific social significance, since this is the first research conducted in Montenegro in this area.

Keywords: marketing strategies, protected areas, marketing mix, promotion strategies, positioning strategies, public relations.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic marketing involves an active process of identifying and managing marketing activities toward marketing objectives or marketing management in order to adjust the marketing activities to the changes occurring

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in the environment. Strategic marketing is a relatively new area of marketing that is based on the theory and practice of creating and implementing marketing strategies. The marketing strategy is the central issue of marketing management (Milisavljevic, 2010). Filipovic et al. (2010) recognize the strategic marketing as a process by which the marketing managers formulate and implement marketing strategies in order to achieve the goals set in given environmental conditions and those of the company itself. The main task of the strategic marketing planning is to make the company flexible enough to include sufficient favourable opportunities from the environment in order to survive even in the conditions of business mistakes (Kotler, Keller, 2008).

Generally speaking, there are four key attributes of strategic marketing and they relate to the overall objectives of the company, involve numerous stakeholders, entail short-term and long-term goals, and recognize the balance between effectiveness and efficiency. According to Dess et al. (2007), the strategic marketing process includes: strategic analysis of environmental factors, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation.

Strategic planning of marketing promotion plays a major role in increasing the awareness of protected areas. In this context, it is necessary to improve the developmental strategy and innovate the strategies for the promotion of protected areas in Montenegro. These strategies will contribute to the development of the eco-tourism in Montenegro, have an impact on the confidence of users of tourist services, as well as the development of the entire national brand.

The International Tourism Society - The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2014) defines ecotourism as "a responsible travel to natural areas that protects the environment and improves the welfare of local population". Like all forms of sustainable tourism, eco-tourism is also a dynamic area, with new techniques and approaches which are developed every year. Local destinations must be prepared to properly finance the management of eco-tourism or they will risk the disruption of their natural and cultural resources, and ultimately, its position in the rapidly growing international market (Epler and Wood, 2002). Research confirms that tourism can have positive effects on nature conservation (Nyaupane and Thapa, 2006) and development of an area so that it can enable the improvement of economic opportunities for local people (Poissonnet et al., 2006) and improve the quality of life in local communities.

According to the definition of protected natural areas, which was adopted at the Fourth World Congress of National Parks and Protected Areas, national parks provide opportunities for: scientific research, wildlife protection, protection of species and genetic diversity, protection of specific natural and cultural values, tourism and recreation, sustainable use of natural resources and maintenance of cultural and traditional values (Kadić and Markovic, 2006). According to the definitions applied in the UN - ECE /FAO (2014), the national park is a protected area which is managed mainly for the protection of ecosystems and recreation. The Skadar Lake National Park, which is analyzed in this paper and for which the research has been done, with the proposed strategies, is the only national park

dominated by aquatic and wetland ecosystems and the largest lake in the Balkans, which has great potential for the development of eco-tourism in Montenegro. The Northern marshy coast itself (about 20,000 hectares) offers ideal conditions for the development of wildlife, especially for the life of birds. 281 species of birds live, nest, winter or relocate on the lake, and therefore it has the status of the BirdLife's Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and is included on the world List of Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR). According to the information from the website of the NP Skadar Lake, 48 species of fish, 50 species of mammals (the only water representative is an otter), numerous amphibians, reptiles and insects live in this lake.

Protection of certain areas, and by that nature protection, has a long history in Serbia, Europe and USA. On the territory of Republic of Serbia one of the oldest PA is "Obedska bara", protected 1874th year and today has one of the strictest regimes. One of the first law on nature protection in Serbia dates back to 1960th when first national park "Fruška gora" (NPPG) was declared, while law in 1977 defined exact boundaries of this NP (Đorđević et al, 2009). Many forest in the middle age had some protection but this was related on the use of aristocrats, for their own purpose. This purpose was usually connected with hunting activities (Martinić, 2010). In the world one of the oldest recorder forms of nature protection is NP "Yellowstone" which dates from 1872. Protection of nature in region also has a long history, protected area "Biogradska Gora" in Montenegro dates from 1878 and it belongs to the group of the oldest reserves in the world (Curovic et al., 2011).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Today, tourists are divided into subgroups according to various characteristics they have (Kotler et al, 2002). According to Dolničar (2007), tourists have different images of their ideal vacation which indicate that they form heterogeneous groups, so the market segmentation is a strategic tool for tourism companies. The next important step is the positioning strategy which is the combination of marketing activities aimed at the implementation of a product or service in a way that a specific position with target customers is achieved. The next step is differentiation as a process of designing a set of significant differences in order to differentiate the offer of one national park from its competitors. This strategy is based on the ability of the marketing service, a strong potential of research and development activity, as well as the tradition and experience in this field. The branding strategy refers to a whole set of strategies and procedures which define the common and specific elements of a product or service, as well as their integration into the existing product portfolio of the company. An efficient branding strategy at its core has to have not only the user, but, above all, the employees, who should be clearly communicated the brand values which requires a good internal communication system. The brand promise will be fulfilled if everybody in the company emphasize with a given brand (Kotler and Keller, 2010). Finally, the application of integrated marketing

communication strategies enables a two-way communication with target audiences, which enhances the very process of strategic marketing planning of the development of a certain area, through the marketing mix instruments, as well as the profiling of target groups directed at the given fields (Ognjanov, 2009). IMK activities help them in promoting the brand in many ways, so good communication is essential in building long-term relationships with customers. (Žugić, 2014)

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the impact of the strategies for the promotion of protected areas on development and positioning of protected areas. Marketing promotion strategies can lead to an increase in the awareness of the importance of protected areas. A good practice of the marketing approach to the promotion of protected areas can be implemented in other countries and thus promote the development of protected areas, as a kind of treasure of each country.

The following methodology of writing and research has been used in the paper: methods of empirical research (collection of primary data: surveys, focus groups, data analysis and statistical processing, analysis of secondary data, comparative analysis) and methods of logical explanation (methods of analysis and synthesis, abstraction and concretization methods, generalization and specialization methods; inductive and deductive reasoning).

The analysis from secondary sources which are available in the national park, as well as in the broader literature on the national park, was first done in the paper. This secondary analysis provides the basis for the development of specific strategies for further development of Skadar Lake, an increase in the awareness of the importance of preserving the ecosystem in Montenegro. The collection of primary data has been done through a survey and a focus group, with the results of their analysis and recommendations for further work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

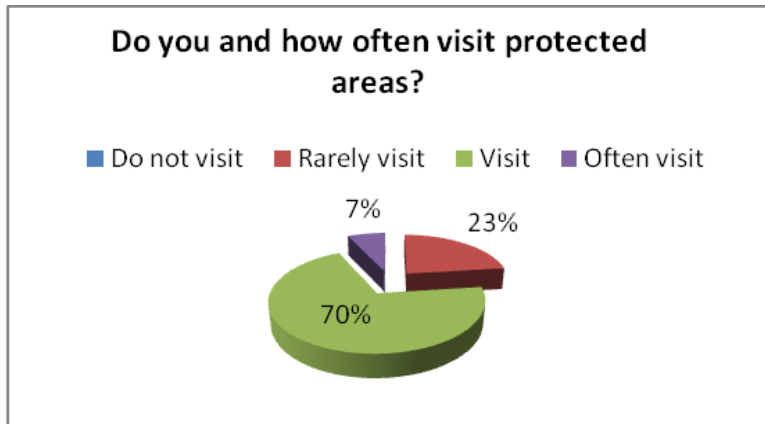
Presentation of the results of the research of the positioning of national parks of Montenegro through a survey

The subject matter of the research through a survey is the positioning of the national parks of Montenegro, in order to confirm the hypothesis that promotion strategies, as part of strategic marketing planning, increase awareness of the importance of continuous development of protected areas and thus directly affecting the promotion of the tourism and economy of Montenegro. For the purposes of research on the positioning of National Parks (Skadar Lake), a survey has been conducted in the form of an interview and a focus group.

A survey was conducted on the Faculty of Metallurgy and Technology in Podgorica. The questionnaire contained twenty-six (26) questions, and one hundred (100) professors and students responded to it. Of the total number of a hundred respondents, forty-four were female and fifty-six were male. Out of one hundred respondents, 45 were in the category up to 25 years. 32 persons were in

the 25-35 year category and 23 in the category of 35 and over. Out of one 100 respondents, sixty-four are from Podgorica, twelve from Niksic, six from Danilovgrad, five from Bijelo Polje, four from Mojkovac, four from Hercegovina, four from Cetinje and one person from Budva.

As for the question of whether and how often they visit the protected areas, 23 persons stated that they rarely visited protected areas; seventy respondents stated that they visited the protected areas while 7 people responded that they often visited the protected areas.



Source: Author's development

Graph 1 – Question: Do you and how often do you visit the protected areas?

Out of one hundred respondents, 89 circled the option under a) - once a year, while the remaining 11 circled the option under b) - several times a year

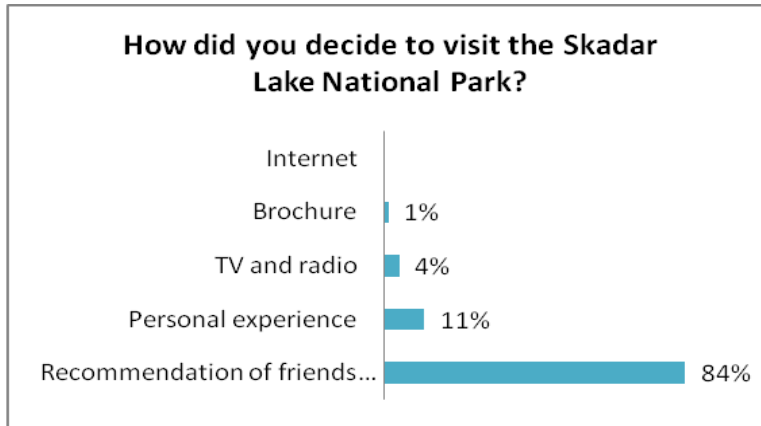


Source: Author's development

Graph 2 – Question: How often do you visit the National Parks of Montenegro?

According to the responses to the questionnaires, 84 respondents were prompted by friends and relatives through their recommendations, 11 were

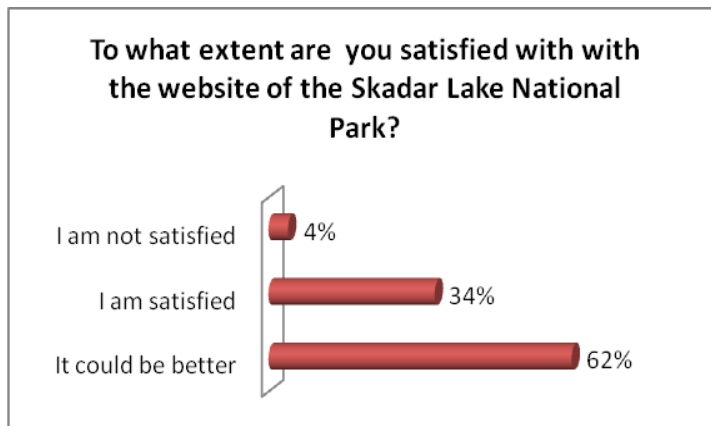
guided by personal experience, 4 was encouraged through TV and radio, and one person through a brochure.



Source: Author's development

Graph 3 - How did you decide to visit the Skadar Lake National Park?

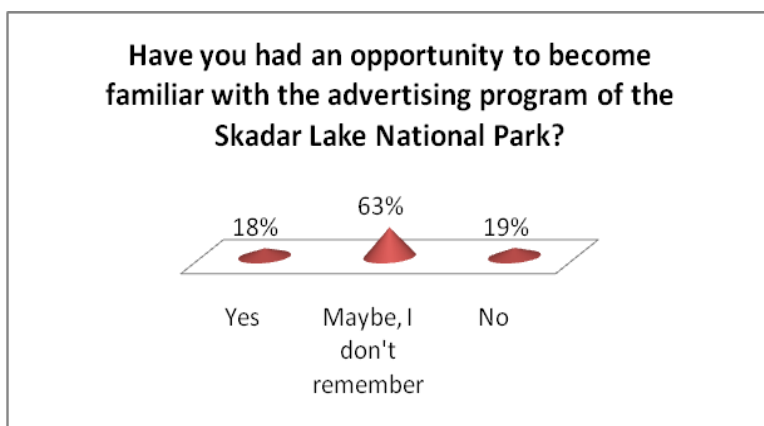
When asked to what extent you are satisfied with the website of the Skadar Lake National Park, 34 respondents were satisfied with the website of the Skadar Lake National Park, 62 considered that the site could be better, while 6 people were not satisfied with the offer from the website.



Source: Author's development

Graph 4 - To what extent are you satisfied with the website of the Skadar Lake National Park?

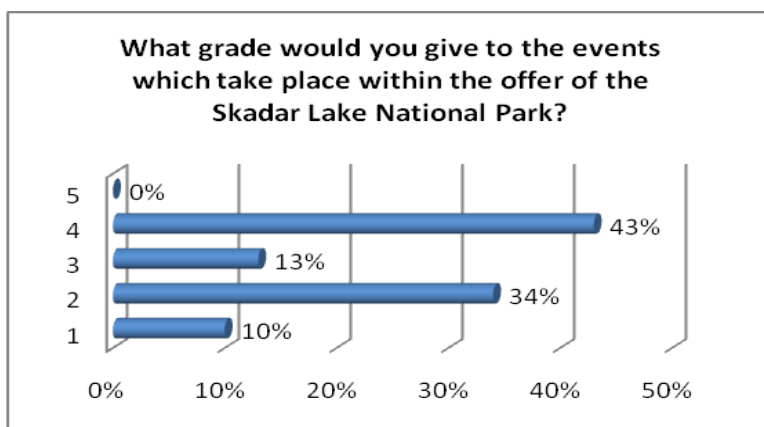
When asked if they are familiar with the advertising program of the Skadar Lake National Park, 18 gave a positive answer, 63 persons responded with maybe, I don't remember, while 19 people gave a negative answer.



Source: Author's development

Graph 5 - Have you had an opportunity to become familiar with the advertising program of the Skadar Lake National Park?

According to the survey sample the following ratings were assigned in terms of ratings of the events within the offer of the Skadar Lake National Park. Even 9 respondents gave a negative rating in terms of the events and programs within the offer of the Skadar Lake National Park, 34 respondents rated the existing events with grade two, 13 respondents rated them with grade three, 43 respondents awarded grade four, while none of the respondents gave grade five.

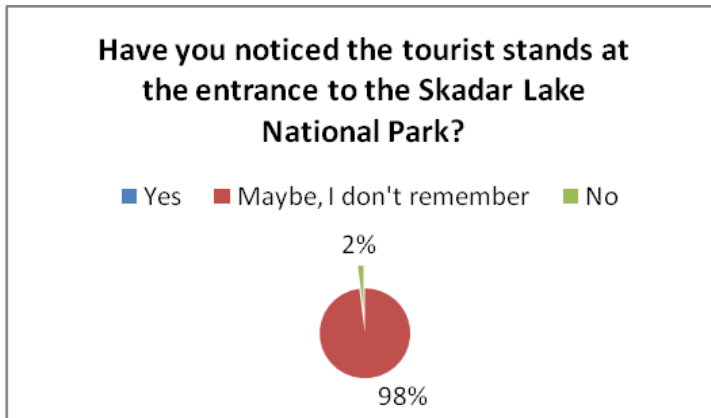


Source: Author's development

Graph 6 - What grade would you give to the events which take place within the offer of the Skadar Lake National Park?

Out of one 100 respondents, even 98 were not sure that they had noticed the tourist stands at the entrance to the Skadar Lake National Park, and 2 did not observe the mentioned stands. None of the respondents answered positively to the question.

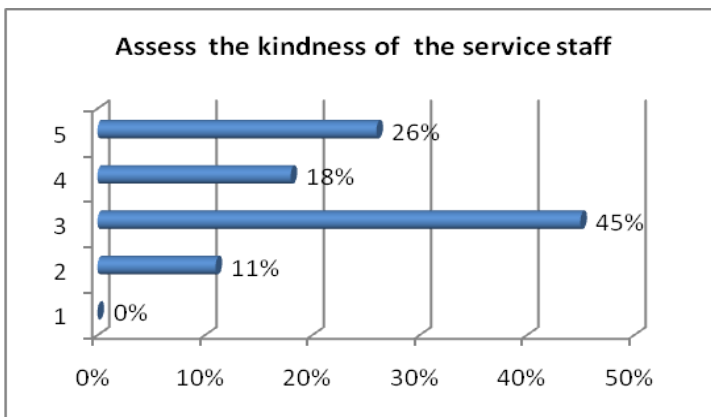
In assessing the kindness of staff, no service user gave a low rating in terms of kindness of service staff, 11 gave the grade of two, 43 gave an average grade of three, 18 circled the grade four and 26 circled the grade five.



Source: Author's development

Graph 7 - Have you noticed the tourist stands at the entrance to the Skadar Lake National Park?

In assessing the kindness of staff, no service user gave a low rating in terms of kindness of service staff, 11 gave the grade of two, 43 gave an average grade of three, 18 circled the grade four and 26 circled the grade five.



Source: Author's development

Graph 8 - Assess the kindness of the service staff

The results of the survey alarmingly suggest necessary changes and the strengthening of marketing capacity through the processes of better accession to the needs of users of the NP. It is notable that most people visit the NP for vacation purposes, which gives guidance as to how the offer should be enriched so that it is interesting to visitors and educational at the same time so as to raise

awareness of the importance of the park itself from the environmental, marketing, tourism and every other aspect. Moreover, a lot more should be done in terms of advertising as the necessary parameter aimed at animating as a large number of tourists as possible. The NP as such has to be present on the media map of Montenegro to a greater extent, both in terms of advertising parameters, as well as the offer itself. The information about the National Park of Montenegro can be found on the Internet, but its visual identification must be improved, it must be included in the social networks, and its existing offer has to be modeled and presented in a better way. The aforementioned makes it clear that the offer of the Skadar Lake website has to be technically elaborated and improved. The needs and wants of users are the main parameter and the focus to which special attention has to be given.

Poor positioning of stands can be considered as marketing failure since as much as 98% of respondents were not sure whether they had noticed the existence of stands. The result that there is no person among the respondents who has rated the offer with grade 5 is a clear indicator that the offer of the national park should be improved. In this respect, it is necessary to make a better access to the needs of users of the park and consequently get closer to their wishes. The existing events are currently satisfactory (32%), according to the sample, which is neither the limit nor the maximum. The program has to be more diverse with more parameters and forms of animation included from the category for the youngest to those for people in their mature years. Additional efforts of all factors, more willingness, resources and state assistance are necessary so that everybody has better outcome in the end and that satisfaction is mutual.

Focus group and analysis of the results obtained

In addition to the survey, another empirical research in the form of a focus group has been conducted which is oriented towards the employees in the Company National Parks of Montenegro. The focus group consists of 5 questions, which are formulated in a way that the employees give their opinion and experience gained through the previous work.

Mainly positive responses were received to the first question of whether the NP Skadar Lake is well positioned compared to other parks in the country and the region, with an emphasis that further work is needed on improving the situation.

Given the fact that the ecological tourism is constantly expanding, there is a huge unused area for innovation and adaptation to increasingly demanding needs of tourists. The responses to the question of whether the users of the National Park can commend a good service and high standards were generally optimistic and pointed out that additional investment and support by the state were necessary. The necessity is reflected in the development and strengthening of existing capacities and seeking the necessary resources needed to strengthen the services and standards.

The next question refers to the benefits of the Skadar Lake National Park as compared to other parks. The majority of respondents agree that one of the biggest advantages is that one can get a varied offer and the beauty of nature in one area. A diversity of plant and animal species as well as the position itself are differential and authentic in comparison to other parks in the country and abroad. One of the responses was: "Good connection, access to the sea via the Bojana, transport, climate, rich water world of plants and animals, a good offer of caterers and accommodation, advantages for business."

The next question related to the fact of whether the strengthening of the offer and the range of services of the NP Skadar Lake would contribute to a higher number of visitors. The beauty of the nature and areas of Montenegro is certainly an advantage, but without appropriate promotional activities, it may be negligible. Almost all respondents agree with this. The majority of respondents agree that it is important to keep up with the innovations in the field of ecotourism, dictated by the world market.

The last question was about the specific steps which Montenegro needs to undertake in order to improve the environmental image and strengthen the offer through the National Parks of Montenegro. The responses obtained were diverse, ranging from the statement that it is necessary to change the personnel in tourism, give preference to young, ambitious people full of knowledge, who are willing to learn and apply their knowledge to the one such as this:

"The steps that Montenegro should undertake regarding the improvement of the image, in my opinion, concern the preservation of nature, which is our future. Let an ecological approach be one of those positive associations which tourists will have when they choose an ecological destination. Montenegro is a small country, but very visible and present with its visual parameters. Mother Nature has endowed us with beauties, so we have to return it to her in the best possible way and that is the preservation of each of its parts; the offer of the NP needs not only to animate but also retain the users of services. "

On the basis of the research conducted, it can be concluded that Montenegro has the potential to be an attractive ecological and tourist destination, attractive to tourists, but to achieve this it is necessary to work hard in order to create the brand recognizable to tourists worldwide. The strengthening of the intellectual capacity is necessary, as well as the improvement of the marketing infrastructure, establishment of better model platforms with a view to profitability, allocation of funds for the creation of a better range of the offer, better connection with tourism organizations, better use of the media potential.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis which indicates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the internal and external environment is used for the purposes of strategic planning of the development of the NP Skadar Lake.

Table 1: SWOT matrix, the analysis for the NP Skadar Lake

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Geographical position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●The proximity of important tourist markets <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Authentic features of the region ●The largest lake in the Balkans with an active water regime ●One of the largest wetland bird habitats in the Mediterranean <p>Cultural, social and economic situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Cultural heritage that speaks of the turbulent history of the area ●The traditional architecture and cultural and historical relics ●Traditional, varied and authentic economy <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Good access from Podgorica and the Montenegrin coastal centers, as well as from the southern Croatian and northern Albanian tourist centers ●Low level of water traffic <p>Institutional framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Increased capacity of the JPNPCG professional services and the Protection Service of the Park in the past few years ●Ad-hoc communication with the local population on specific issues ●Well-equipped administrative building 	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Poor and insufficient database on the status of certain segments of the ecosystem ●Degradation of natural landscapes with illegal dumps, unfinished buildings, excavation etc. ●Contamination of flora and fauna from various sources both in Montenegro and Albania <p>Cultural, social and economic situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Neglected sites of cultural wealth. ●Depopulation in the western and southern regions, which threatens the existence of traditional settlements ●Overpopulation on the northern coast, which causes an increase in the pressure on the area <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Wastewater treatment ●Low quality of accommodation ●Lack of standardized facilities for the promotion of ecotourism <p>Institutional framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Communication with the local population is not sufficiently institutionalized ●Lack of personnel and technical equipment in the Protection Service

Opportunities	Threats
<p data-bbox="162 229 417 256">Geographical position</p> <ul data-bbox="213 262 580 378" style="list-style-type: none"> •An outstanding position that provides an excellent opportunity, especially on the travel market <p data-bbox="162 444 610 471">Cultural, social and economic situation</p> <ul data-bbox="213 476 610 784" style="list-style-type: none"> •Trends of the tourism market offer the possibility for the development of sustainable tourism products •Increased interest in cultural heritage •Increasing knowledge of sustainable development and the need to maintain the natural and cultural heritage <p data-bbox="162 820 329 848">Infrastructure</p> <ul data-bbox="213 853 591 970" style="list-style-type: none"> •Proposed construction and expansion of the main roads in order to improve international connectivity <p data-bbox="162 1039 439 1066">Institutional framework</p> <ul data-bbox="213 1071 587 1379" style="list-style-type: none"> •The RAMSAR Convention offers guidelines (manuals, positive experiences, etc.). •The interest of the international community in cross-border protected areas can provide access to additional external funds and institutional support •The potential for inclusion in the World Heritage List 	<p data-bbox="637 353 793 380">Environment</p> <ul data-bbox="689 385 1076 535" style="list-style-type: none"> •Possible regulation of Skadar Lake would lead to changes of a limnological character of the Lake, wetlands and cultural landscape <p data-bbox="637 815 806 842">Infrastructure</p> <ul data-bbox="689 848 1099 964" style="list-style-type: none"> •The planned highway Bar - Belgrade through the area of Skadar Lake has a potentially large impact on the landscape and ecosystems <p data-bbox="637 1033 915 1061">Institutional framework</p> <ul data-bbox="689 1066 1074 1306" style="list-style-type: none"> •Non-compliance of legislation in terms of the Skadar Lake area management •Non-compliance of jurisdiction of institutional units in the implementation of mechanisms that may prevent some illegal activities

Source: Author's development

It can be concluded from the above analysis that, in addition to high quality and rich parameters, attention must be focused on resolving those issues that represent the problem not only to present generations, but also possible future generations. Therefore, stronger efforts are needed in order to strengthen

both the capacities and the willingness to make the well-known beautiful research area even more promising and desirable for consumers.

In general, in Europe, „ about a thousand years, many forests were placed under protection as hunting grounds for aristocracy” (Martinić 2010). For example, nature protection in neighboring Serbia has long tradition since first protected area was established in 1874 (Djordjevic et al. 2014), similar to Montenegro, where oldest protected area dates from 1878 (Čurović et al. 2011). As a result of process of transition, many countries began the process of involvement of civil society, especially local communities and non-governmental sector in the management of protected area (Balloffet, Martin, 2007). In many countries of Western Europe „...legislative and budgetary responsibilities for nature conservation rest at sub-national administrative levels” while these responsibilities „...in Eastern Europe are still centralized” (Borrini-Feyerabend 2013). The countries with the greatest diversity in terms of types of managers are Latvia, Bulgaria and Finland and the highly centralized system is present in Albania, Croatia, Finland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Stanciu et al. 2013). The most common type of management in Eastern Europe is governance by government, with the state having the most serious role in this sector (Stanciu et al. 2013).

CONCLUSION

The main achieved objective of this paper is the analysis of the impact of strategic planning of the marketing promotion with a view to increasing the awareness of protected areas. The specific objective was to emphasize the importance of continuous development of protected areas, which directly affects the improvement of tourism and economy of Montenegro. Preservation and promotion of protected areas in the global environment depend on application of adequate marketing concepts and therefore it was necessary to shed light on this complex and conditioned problem that points out to the central problem of the research. The results also confirm that comparative advantages of protected areas can be achieved by using different combinations of the marketing mix instrument. The main role of the marketing promotion strategy is to increase awareness of protected areas, as well as to combine competences and other strategies already applied in protected areas, thereby coordinating the challenges and constraints of the environment and finding the best ways to realize the mission and vision of building the brand of the protected area.

Planning the marketing strategies of the promotion of protected areas is one of the insufficiently explored fields of application of marketing strategies, and prior to any implemented strategy of the promotion of protected areas, it is necessary to do a strategic analysis of the micro and macro environment, on the basis of which appropriate strategies are selected, the application of marketing strategies is planned and then implemented in order to increase awareness of the importance of protected areas with a view to better positioning and branding of Montenegro. Protected areas should be recognizable, with a strong image and a clear message to target publics, which is an overall task of the strategic marketing planning of the promotion of protected areas.

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