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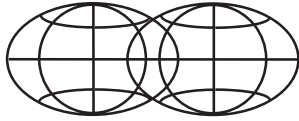
**Possibilities for mountain-based
adventure tourism : the case of
Serbia**

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Possibilities for mountain-based adventure tourism: the case of Serbia

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Abstract. Adventure tourism is a specific type of tourism that has been increasingly popular in Serbia in recent years. In this regard, the paper identifies the basic characteristics of adventure tourism, its development in Serbia, with a great emphasis placed on high mountain areas that, owing to their physical and geographic characteristics, possess huge potential. The paper aims, among other things, to identify factors encouraging or limiting development of adventure tourism in Serbia, analysing the practice, defining potential destinations and suggesting appropriate measures in order to promote it.

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Contents:

1. Introduction	99
2. Theoretical background	100
3. Material and research methods	101
4. Results and findings	102
5. Discussion	106
6. Conclusions	109
Note	109
References	110

1. Introduction

In recent decades the development of tourism in various areas has displayed a number of characteristics that have come to be seen as symptomatic

of change and which mark the start of a new stage in the history of this key economic and social phenomenon. New trends in the tourism market have influenced the appearance of specific types of tourism (special interest tourism), different from

the traditional ones. New or alternative tourism is based, because of the changes in tourist demand, on the concept of sustainable development and responsible exchange of all participants, because it is mutually beneficial both to tourists and the local community. One of the important characteristics of tourist demand is a desire to stay in an unpoluted, protected environment. Potential tourists are willing to pay more if it provides them with a stay at a tourist destination the characteristics of which are compliant with their desires, needs and expectations.

According to the research of Ewert and Jamieson (2003) and Swarbrooke et al. (2003) adventure tourism is one of the sectors of tourism that has rapidly developed in the world for the last two or three decades. The foundation of adventure tourism is adventure, and it brings large revenues to the world economy, with tendencies of further growth. The affirmation of adventure tourism was influenced by the internet as a revolution in marketing, as well as by extensive use of adventure photographs in promoting a destination (Buckley, 2003; Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

An adventure in tourism is a well-conceived experience that is 'for sale'. A tourist adventure can sometimes be riskier than a real one in which professionals participate, whereas tourists are mainly amateurs with significantly lower skills and abilities to respond to challenges. According to Čomić and Davidovic (2003), what distinguishes everyday life from an adventure is more related to the intensity of inner experience than to the change of scenery. An adventure has the power to compensate for boredom and lack of excitement in everyday life. It breaks the stereotype of living en route between work and home, where time keeps monotonously repeating. It involves a certain dose of fear or the presence of a real danger, a conscious exposure to fear and threat, but with a belief in a happy and safe outcome. An adventure interrupts the continuity and repetition of the same events and introduces new events to life that are seemingly 'beyond time'. As an escape from the everyday, adventure destinations are most often far from very populated areas, which make them unknown and mystical.

2. Theoretical background

Notwithstanding its growing popularity in the world, there is not a uniform definition of adventure tourism (Buckley, 2000; Bentley, Page, 2001; Weber, 2001: 374; Neirotti, 2003; Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Page et al., 2005: 382; Shephard, Evans, 2005), which points to the complexity of this tourist phenomenon. This is a consequence of the following factors: numerous activities of adventure tourism, different perceptions by participants (adventures are experienced in different ways by different participants), and the overlapping of the contents of adventure tourism and adventure recreation. The biggest problem in defining adventure tourism is that most types of tourism entail a certain form of recreation, in terms of resources, facilities, and impact on the environment (Hall, Page, 2002; Williams, 2003). What clearly distinguishes adventure tourism from adventure is that this type of tourism is a commercialised adventure in which the activities are organised and directed beforehand. In a real adventure, a participant is responsible for creating an adventure, whereas a tour operator is responsible for a tourist adventure.

Some researchers underline the importance of motivation as driving force elements in the analysis of adventure tourism (Veal, 2006). Tourists, when asked about the motives for taking part in an adventure, state that they want to forget their job and everyday life, and become part of something completely different, forget about responsibilities and their surroundings (Wickens, 2002: 843). Several motivating factors for tourists in adventure tourism can be distinguished: (a) fun and independence; (b) vacation; (c) health and recovery; (d) wanderlust; (e) nature (Dey, Sarma, 2010: 343). Depending on the region where an activity takes place, some of the aforementioned factors will prevail. Some participants are more motivated by a desire for new knowledge than by risk, although adventure involves both. The final outcomes of adventures are most frequently overcoming dangers and risks, with development of personal skills and their application in a certain situation and learning based on experience and achievement (Page et al., 2005: 382). Other authors mostly studied

the characteristics of adventures, experiences and perceptions by participants (Sung et al., 2001; Sung, 2004; Trauer, 2006). The structure and composition of adventure tours were described in some studies: rafting (Fluker, Turner, 2000), mountaineering (Beedie, 2003; Pomfret, 2006), adventure tourism more generally (Foley et al., 2001; Weber, 2001; Cloutier, 2003), etc.

Adventure sports promise challenges (Mortlock, 2000), excitement, stimulation (Tomlinson, 2001), risk, uncertainty, and novelty (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). An activity can be classified as an adventure if it possesses the following characteristics: (a) uncertain outcomes; (b) some element of danger and risk; (c) challenge; (d) anticipated rewards; (e) novelty; (f) stimulation and excitement; (g) escapism and separation; (h) exploration and discovery; (i) absorption and focus, and (j) contrasting emotions (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). The common denominators of adventure tourism are risk and uncertainty of outcomes (Weber, 2001: 361–363; Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Shephard, Evans, 2005).

Adventure tourism is manifested mostly as a short-term holiday in which a tourist gains certain experience and skills (Buckley, 2003). Generally, adventure tourism entails organised performance of a commercial tour, in which the main attractions are activities related to the physical and geographic characteristics of the terrain. This type of tourism requires specialised equipment. During an adventure tour, the participants can have various emotions, experiences and expectations. 'Tourism is a commercial industry as well as a social phenomenon. Tour providers package and sell commercial products to retail clients. The dynamics of the industry, the behaviour of the people involved, their destinations and impacts are all intimately linked with the structure of these products' (Buckley, 2007: 1428).

Adventure tourism is a complex and dynamic tourism phenomenon. There are favourable physical and geographic conditions in Serbia for the development of specific types of adventure tourism. This particularly refers to the mountainous area of Serbia, which is sufficiently far from the leading urban centres and sufficiently unknown to local and foreign participants of adventure tourism trends. The aforementioned studies are the theoretical foundations of our study.

Development of adventure tourism in Serbia requires the establishment of the existing trends in a macro environment and in all its domains (economic, social, technological, etc.), identification of opportunities and threats (on the local and foreign market) and performance of a detailed analysis of internal resources (strengths and weaknesses) in accordance with the changes, tendencies and trends in tourism.

3. Material and research methods

In this paper we used methods of human geography and tourism, which combine methods of scientific research with the methods of communicating the achieved results. These two standpoints determined the methodology in our research, in defining and communicating results. The complexity of the subject matter required the application of scientific methods suitable for setting up hypotheses, proving attitudes, as well as verifying and forming conclusions. The spatial organisation of tourist activities in mountain areas has been studied on the basis of theoretical models and spatial plans. In this paper the study is limited to the four mountain zones (clusters) which include 16 tourism centres: I Carpathian and Balkan Mountains, II Mountains of Stari Vlah and Raška, III Mountains of Ibar-Kopaonik region and IV Valjevo Mountains (see Fig. 2). The area was chosen due to its high quality information base, availability of sources of documentary material, statistical data and the concentration of tourists. By comparing and interpreting the data, we have tried to point to the importance of tourist flows in mountain areas as well as to the concentration of tourists around the adventure tourism spots. The ideas and assumptions have been presented by the statistical and cartographic method.

Adjustments to the tourist demand, apart from monitoring the number of tourists and overnights, include familiarity with qualitative features: age and educational structure, origin, spending habits and previous experience with travel. Lack of this information in adventure tourism research leaves a gap which makes it difficult to define the directions of tourism development. The subject of the

analysis in this paper includes the indicators of tourist flows (accommodation capacity, arrivals of foreign and domestic tourists, overnights, and seasonality of the turnover) in four mountain areas, in the period between 1999 and 2010. The data used was obtained from primary sources: statistical and municipal almanacs, analyses, statements, documentary material and from authorized statistical websites.

The minimum annual number of overnights by bed, the index, should be at least 120 for the establishment to operate with profit in the case of Serbia. By using the method of calculating the *index of sustainable tourism management* (STMi) in 16 tourist centres, we tried to point to the changes in the way of tourist business during the transition period and the diffusion of tourism outside city centres. Based on the number of beds and tourists, an index of capacity utilisation can be determined, that is, of the economic sustainability of the tourist business. A simple formula is calculated according to the equation,

$$STMi = T/B$$

in which T stands for the number of tourists and B for the total number of beds.

When talking about the analysis of resources and identification of opportunities and threats to tourism from the surroundings, we used the concept of SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis is a method of recognising and identifying the key development potentials and limitations, therefore a basis for creating a vision and defining the guidelines for the development of adventure tourism. The task of the SWOT analysis of adventure tourism in Serbia is to distinguish between those factors that represent development strengths and development weaknesses, and after considering the trends in broader surroundings, to point to the basic development opportunities, i.e. threats resulting from the analysis.

The SWOT analysis is a simple, well-known and recognised way of prospecting and identifying the key internal and external factors (characteristics), relevant in different conditions and with different characteristics and intensities, of particular importance for the estimation of potential development effects. The answer to this question involves identifying and classifying four groups of factors:

S – strengths, W – weaknesses, O – opportunities and T – threats. Although fast, efficient and frequently applied, it does not provide specific and clear answers, and therefore gives no ready-made solutions, not unlike the majority of analyses in the field of management. Consequently, it is, in particular, a way of efficient prospecting, inventorying and organising facts (information and sensitive characteristics) as a foundation for building the strategy and operation plans. The performed SWOT analysis showed a wide scope of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and, based on them, a number of specific consequent and/or causative activities and priorities.

4. Results and findings

According to their origin and geological structure, their morphological characteristics and the directions in which they extend, the mountains of Serbia can be divided into three groups. The first group includes the Serbian-Macedonian Mass with the mountains extending on both sides of South Morava and the Great Morava (mounts: Juhor, Jastrebac, Čemernik, Besna Kobila, Dukat, and others). The eastern part of the country consists of the Carpathian and Balkan Mountains (mounts: Stara, Suva, Ozren, Rtanj, Homoljske, Deli Jovan, and others). The third group includes the Dinaric Mountains. This is a mountain range mostly in the western part of Serbia (mounts: Kopaonik, Tara, Zlatibor, Golija, Zlatar, and the Valjevo mountains, and others). Naturally, not all the mountains in Serbia are attractive destinations for adventure tourism. The high mountains of western and eastern Serbia are the most significant (see Fig. 2).

The mountains of Serbia are natural tourist resources with distinct recreational, aesthetic and exceptional features. In the conditions of urbanisation and globalisation, the importance and attractiveness of mountains, as oases of preserved nature, is growing. The types of adventure tourism that can be first developed in the mountains of Serbia are hiking, mountaineering and cycling.

Hiking and trekking are very popular activities in the world. They involve hiking in the countryside, along the already established paths and carrying

appropriate equipment. Although hiking tourism is one of the most widespread types of tourism in the world, it is not the case in Serbia. On almost all the bigger mountains in Serbia (Kopaonik, Stara, Golija, the Valjevo mountains, Rudnik, Homoljske, Tara), there are walking paths appropriate for hiking, and their difficulty is determined by their length (approximately 20–30 km) and altitude. Most walking paths are easy to follow. Hiking is excellent for relaxing emotionally and enjoying nature, but also for getting fit. It does not require special equipment or preparations, and it is appropriate for a wider scope of participants.

Mountaineering has a long tradition in Serbia, but this activity has not been widespread as regards adventure tourism. Mountaineering expeditions are organised by mountaineering societies within the Mountaineering Association of Serbia. Participants are accommodated in mountain homes, used by mountaineering societies.

Cycle tourism is developing slowly, although numerous European cycling tour operators include Serbia within their routes. There are eight cycle routes in Serbia. The international cycling race ‘Through Serbia’ is of high importance, as it has taken place since 1939 and about 300 foreign contestants take part in it.

Cyclists from Europe become acquainted with Serbia on the Danube Cycle Route, which is a part of the international route Euro Velo 6 (from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea). The route stretches through the valley of the river Danube, from the Hungarian border at Bački Breg to the border with Bulgaria at Negotin. It passes through the plains and hilly and mountainous areas, connecting prominent tourist locations, as well as Belgrade and Novi Sad, the two largest cities in Serbia. The route contains three categories of roads: the main route (asphalt, macadamised and earth roads), alternative routes (asphalt) and detours (suggested rides outside the Danube area). At the border crossings, there are information boards about the route. The whole route is marked by a system of road signs and signposts that facilitate map navigation and spatial orientation.

Mountain biking is important in adventure tourism and it starts where the asphalt ends. There are several mountain biking clubs in Serbia, and there are recreationists as well who travel on bikes

on their own, publishing information about their travels and routes on websites. There are numerous routes for mountain biking and they can be found on mounts Stara, Tara, Zlatibor, Mokra Gora, Valjevo, Homoljske, Beljanica, Kučaj, and others. Mountain biking enthusiasts prefer excitement and strenuous rides on the mountain trails. Mountain biking is often a combination of cycling, mountaineering and being outdoors. The most famous routes are (Vučković, 2008): Užice – Bioska – Kremna – Šargan – Mokra Gora – Dobrun (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – Višegrad (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – Zaovine (Tara) – Mitrovac – Kremna – Užice; Užice – Djetinja Canyon – Stapani – Damat Vrutci – Užice, Jablanica (Zlatibor) – Vardište (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – Kotroman – Mokra Gora – Šargan – Tara (Zborište) – Lake Zaovine – Canyon of the Beli Rzav – Kotroman – Mokra Gora – Šargan – Kremna – Bioska – Divljačka stena – Užice and Belgrade – Valjevo – Debelo Brdo – Bajina Bašta – Tara – Dobrun (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – Sopotnica – Prijepolje (see Fig. 2).

Cycling is most frequently a component of a holiday, i.e. a journey. A mild adventure of cycle tourism involves a slower ride, sightseeing and meeting local people. It is connected with thrill seeking, testing one’s strength and ability, but it also has a strong environmental dimension. It can be combined with other types of tourism, most often with rural tourism. Since cycle tourism entails free activities in which keeping fit is an additional satisfaction but not the main goal, it is different from cycling and bicycle racing.

Table 1. Protected areas and resources of four mountain clusters of adventure tourism

A	B	C	D	E
I	0	6	10	27
II	1	9	7	4
III	1	0	1	0
IV	0	2	2	2
Total:	2	17	20	33

Explanation: A – cluster; B – national park; C – nature park & area of exceptional importance; D – nature reserve; E – monument of nature

Source: Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia

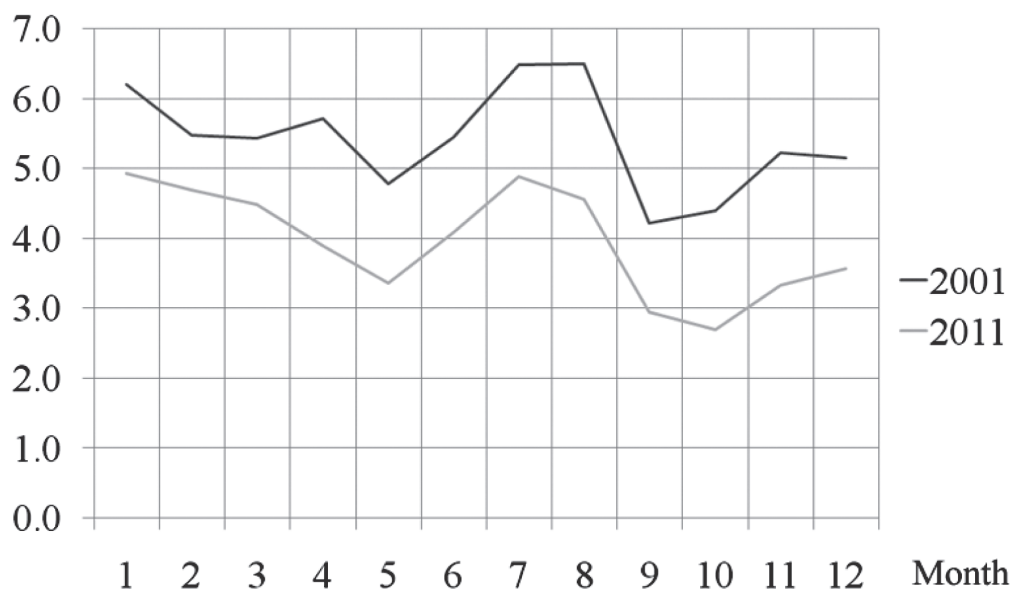


Fig. 1. Seasonality of average number of overnights per tourist in mountain tourist resorts in 2001 and 2011

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Adventure tourism is closely associated with *extreme sports*. Participants' motives for extreme sports have to do with enjoyment caused by raising adrenalin in the encounter with danger, and demonstrating certain skills, but they are also a reflection of the need for an insight into the unknown. Extreme sports in Serbia are in their initial stage of development despite the presence of a number of clubs promoting this form of activities. In extreme sports, the key elements of experience are challenges offered by specific surroundings and risk (Morpeh, 2001). Certain extreme sports can be part of what adventure tourism has to offer in Serbia. These are mostly rafting, paragliding, speleological explorations and free climbing, and the destinations of the aforementioned sports are mostly associated with the mountainous part of the country. Adventure sports involve risk, which can be reduced to a minimum by competent training, safe equipment and personal attitudes of the participants.

Rafting has been increasingly fashionable in Serbia in recent years. Climate conditions allow participants to stay on the rivers without special equipment between May and October. The rivers on which rafting is organised are the Lim, Ibar, Drina, Nišava, and Uvac. There are about a dozen rafting clubs within the Rafting Association of Serbia.

Free climbing appeared as an organised activity in the late 1980s, and the mountaineering society 'Avala' opened its first climbing section in 1990 (Hudeludis, 1998). There are several climbing clubs that are members of the Alpinist-Climbing Association of Serbia. The best known natural rocks for free climbing in Serbia are Borski Stol, Gornjak, Jelašnica, Ovčar and Kablar, and Sićevo.

Paragliding has been gaining importance since the 1990s as the youngest aeronautical sport, which does not require large financial resources. This type of adventure offers its participants experience and challenge, and several paragliding clubs organise training for interested participants. The best known take-off sites in Serbia are: Sićevo, Rajac, Golija, and Suva.

The mountainous area of Serbia is famous for its numerous caves and pits. The presence of karst terrain creates suitable conditions for the development of *speleotourism – caving*. We differentiate between classical and sports speleotours (Genov, 2008). In classical speleotours, caves are prepared for tourists' visits: they have lighting, paths are clearly marked, and tourists walk. Tours are guided by expert guides and no previous preparations or equipment are necessary. In sports speleotours, good physical fitness is needed as well as the escort of a speleologist, because the caves are not

Table 2. Basic indicators of capacities and tourist flows at cluster and tourism centre levels

A	B	C	D		E	F
			a	b		
	Kučevo	108	3,832	1,597	27.0	7.2
	Despotovac	176	1,837	1,645	27.8	7.7
	Bor	880	14,707	5,429	17.9	17.6
I	Boljevac	265	1,346	3,401	25.7	15.6
	Knjaževac	177	2,208	4,727	81.1	12.3
	Sokobanja	2523	60,323	48,837	117.0	2.5
	Pirot	394	6,765	7,223	30.6	35.8
	Nova Varoš	753	16,066	7,087	41.3	10.1
	Prijepolje	477	4,457	2,785	11.9	21.0
II	Čajetina	4099	86,508	110,990	104.7	15.7
	Ivanjica	915	17,354	17,380	96.4	6.3
	Tara	1823	45,444	7,016	24.5	9.0
III	Raška	4686	82,799	65,310	58.3	8.3
	Brus	1387	30,200	16,001	47.3	7.1
IV	Valjevo	2558	49,243	38,708	54.6	11.6
	Rajac	534	786	2,766	19.4	2.6

Explanation: A – cluster; B – tourist centre; C – beds; D – arrivals; E – occupancy (STMi) in 2010; F – share of foreign tourists (%); a – 2001; b – 2010

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

prepared for visits (no lighting or paths). Due to physical strain and challenges, sports speleotours are often called underground alpinism. The best known caves prepared for tourists in Serbia are Resavska (near Despotovac), Zlot caves (near Bor), Rajkova (near Majdanpek), Potpečka (near Užice), Bogovinska (near Bor), and Stopića cave (Zlatibor) (see Fig. 2). There are some partially prepared caves or caves that used to be open to tourists, but have been devastated in the meantime, such as Potpečka, Prekonoška and Petnička cave. Visits are allowed to these caves only in the presence of an expert guide and with appropriate equipment.

The stay of tourists in the mountains affects the quality and quantity of protected areas. Four clusters of mountain-based adventure tourism include two national parks and a number of natural areas and preserved sites that have been prepared for the activities of tourists.

Adjustments to the market caused an increase in the number of accommodation facilities, but also a decrease in the number of beds. Large hotels of the middle category (2-3 stars) with over 200 beds have been replaced by smaller hotels of a high category (4-5 stars), with a capacity of 100 or fewer

beds, and small private accommodation (2 stars). In 2010 the total capacity of selected mountain areas were 21,755 beds (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia – SORS).

Regarding the number of tourist arrivals, the mountains in Serbia are in third place, after cities and spas. In 2001 mountain tourism centres recorded 18.1% of all arrivals and 29.1% of total overnights in Serbia. In 2011 mountains attracted 402,221 tourists (19.4% of total), who made 1,590,016 overnights (23.9% of total Serbia overnights). The same year, the average stay was 4.0 overnights per tourist, suggesting the stationary character of mountain tourism.

Four potential clusters of mountain-based adventure tourism attracted 342,233 tourists in 2010. Tour operators estimate that out of that number 20% participated in some form of adventure tourism. The average share of foreign tourists was 12.0%.

Climate characteristics of mountains significantly influence the seasonal movement of adventure tourists. Average annual temperatures range from 3.6 °C Kopaonik mountain (station at 1,710 m, 43°17' N, 20°48' E) to 11.6 °C at Valjevo

station (176 m, 44°19' N, 19°55' E). Average annual precipitation ranges from 624 mm at Dimitrovgrad (450 m, 43°01' N, 22°45' E) to 1,017 mm at Zlatibor mountain (1,028 m, 43°44' N, 19°43' E). Insolation has little variation and annual averages are around 2000 hours of sun (Zlatibor and Kopaonik mountains are considered to be the sunniest mountains in Serbia). The number of average overnights per tourist by month shows two distinct seasons: winter and summer (see Fig. 1).

5. Discussion

The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia also includes adventure tourism among the promising types of tourism. Several factors influence such a perception of the importance of this type of tourism: during the last decades, adventure tourism has recorded very rapid development, Serbia as a mountainous country has favourable natural prerequisites for this type of tourism, to name but two. The success of Serbia as a new destination of adventure tourism depends mainly on a well-conceived development strategy based on an analysis of all segments of tourist demand and a range of activities relevant to adventure tourism.

Adventure tourism in Serbia is accompanied by poor marketing and is badly positioned compared to other countries in the region, and its organised promotion is yet to take place. This is supported by the fact that few agencies in Serbia have adventure packages on offer. One of them is the Cycling and Mountaineering Centre, specialised for adventure packages in South-East Europe and the Balkans. The agency promotes sustainable and adventure tourism, primarily cycling and hiking. Besides that one, there are several more agencies that offer rafting, hiking and other activities. The organisation 'Wild Serbia' organises individual and group one-day tours of adventure tourism, and the price is, depending on the adventure, between 20 and 80 euros per person. Among adventure tours we distinguish between speleo adventures (visits to undiscovered caves without lighting or paths), canyoning (*exploring canyons* and climbing down river falls using a rope), kayak tours, abseiling (abseiling – descent down steep rocks using a rope), paragliding, free

climbing and so on. So far, the greatest importance in the promotion of adventure tourism in the local market belongs to mountaineering societies, sports clubs (rafting, paragliding, cycling, speleological, alpinist), and student youth organisations. For most inhabitants of Serbia, organised adventure activities are unknown and not very accessible, not so much due to financial obstacles, but because of the poor awareness. A small percentage of the population has tried adventure activities. Diffusional spreading of popular adventure activities has been present in Serbia in recent years, so the young have been showing growing affinity for adventure tourism.

Adventure recreation in nature is a distinctive form of adventure tourism. The natural characteristics and topography of certain parts of Serbia have been especially conducive to this type of tourism. The high mountainous area of Serbia has the highest potential, due to rich natural resources, but adventure tourism can also be developed in the other parts of the country.

Carpathian and the Balkan Mountains of Eastern Serbia (mounts Stara 2,169 m, Suva 1,808 m, Svrljiške 1,334 m, Kučaj 1,243 m, Rtanj 1,560 m, Beljanica 1,336 m) with numerous gorges (Jelašnička, Sićevačka), canyons and caves are interesting destinations of adventure tourism, especially for hiking, free climbing, paragliding, mountain biking and others. Participants interested in culture and tradition have an opportunity to learn about the rich cultural heritage of this part of Serbia and discover natural resources in the form of numerous thermal and mineral springs.

In southwestern Serbia, mountains in the area of *Stari Vlah and Raška* (Zlatibor 1,496 m, Zlatar 1,627, Golija 1,833 m and Tara 1,544 m) and in the *Ibar and Kopaonik area* (Kopaonik, 2,017 m, Željin 1,785 m) are interesting and potential destinations of adventure tourism. That refers primarily to hiking, mountaineering, mountain biking (Tara, Zlatibor and Kopaonik), paragliding (Kopaonik, Golija), speleotourism (Ušačka cave, Ledena cave and Tubić cave), while the rivers are suitable for rafting (Lim, Uvac and Ibar). Kopaonik is the highest mountain in Serbia and a national park. Long-lasting snow cover (November – May) and substantial insolation (about 200 sunny days a year) mark this mountain as one of the most convenient ones for the development of adventure tourism.

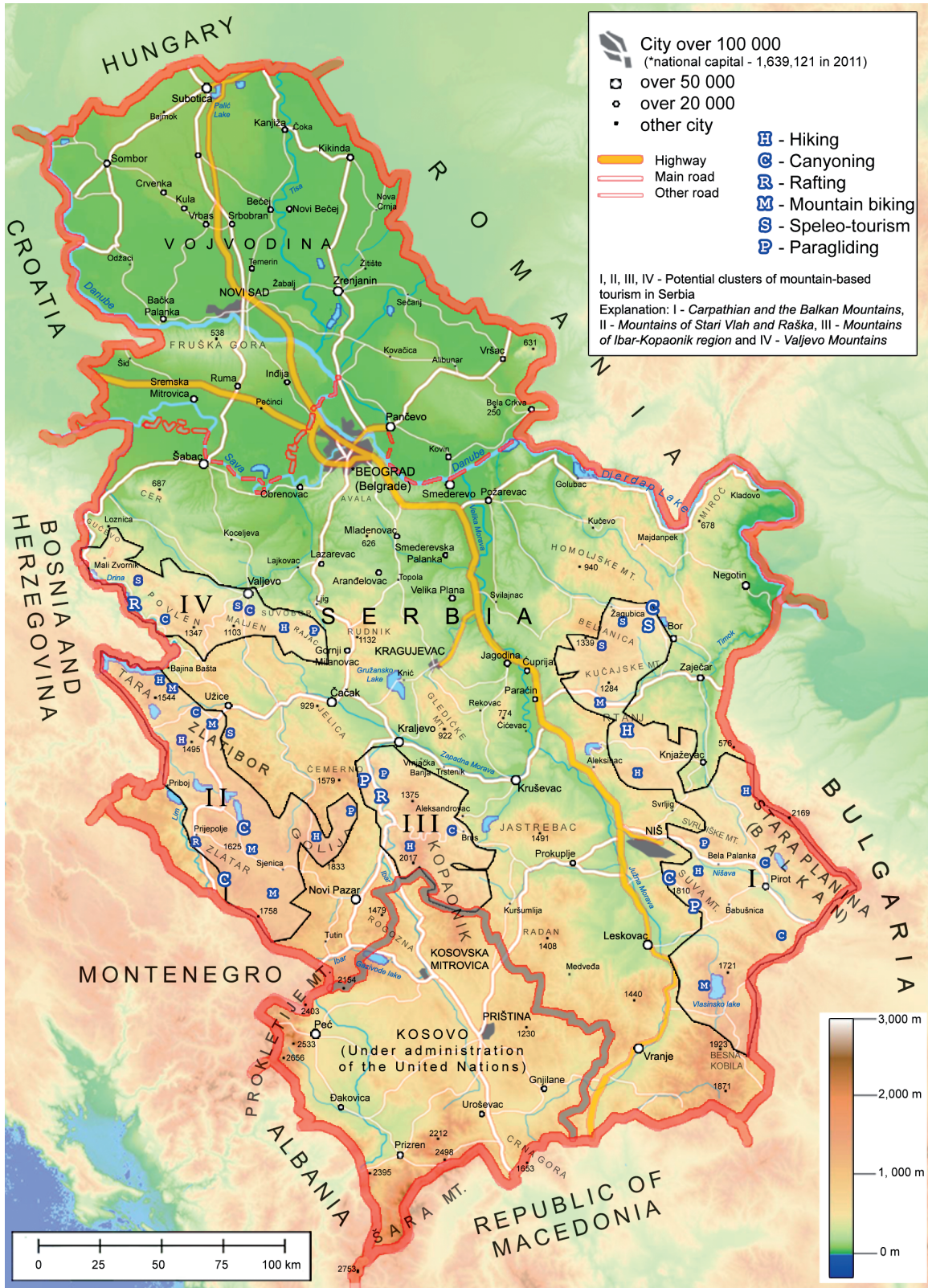


Fig. 2. Potential clusters of mountain-based adventure tourism in Serbia

Explanation: I cluster – Carpathian and the Balkan Mountains; II cluster – Mountains of Stari Vlah and Raška; III cluster – Mountains of Ibar-Kopaonik region; IV cluster – Valjevo Mountains

Source: Map is made on the Global Mapper v.11 basis (digital application) by the authors

Table 3. SWOT analysis of adventure tourism in Serbia

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complementary physical and geographic and anthropogeographic tourist values • Favourable trends in the tourist demand, • 'New' destinations in the international tourism market in the area of adventure tourism, • Positive development of the political situation (Convergence and membership candidacy of the European Union), • Availability of the European Union funds for development projects in the tourism area, • Improving the image of Serbia as a tourist destination, • Attracting foreign investment to development of tourist infrastructure, • Regional and international connecting (cross-border cooperation), • The use of modern information technology for promotion and marketing (e-marketing), • High quality and educated professional staff in institutions involved with development of new forms of tourism in Serbia, with emphasis on adventure tourism, • Initiated forms of intersectional connecting in the field of tourism, ecology and sustainable development, • Positive experiences and examples of good practices regarding development of adventure tourism in the SEE region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public is not familiar enough with the advantages of adventure tourism, • Incomplete infrastructure for development of adventure tourism (small number of viewpoints and rest areas). Besides cycling and mountaineering paths, there are no appropriate possibilities for overnight stays or stops with an appropriate range of food and drinks on offer, • Small number of road signs, • Unstable political situation (the local market), • Insufficient support for tourism development (the local market), • Insufficient cooperation between the stakeholders, • Damage of the natural attractiveness, • A small number of tourist agencies affirming adventure tourism, • Possible political instability, which can jeopardise strategies of sustainable development of Serbia, • Lack of the shared vision of tourism development, • Weak cooperation between the public and private sectors, • Poor road infrastructure in some locations, • A small number of accommodation facilities, • Lack of accommodation facilities that meet the international standards of quality, • Obsolete accommodation capacity and low utilisation, • Lack of standardisation and categorisation, • Undeveloped tourism brand, • Undeveloped brand image, • Unsuitable and insufficient presentation of attractions for tourists, • Disorganisation of offer providers, • Insufficient creativity and innovation, • Moderate promotional activities, • Still present mistrust and lack of understanding of citizens regarding clean environment and tourism, • Lack of citizen initiative regarding development of adventure tourism, • Unplanned construction, <p>PR and advertising promise more than can realistically be achieved. Exaggeration, even in the construction phase, burdens the image which is in its initial phase, and consequently the prospects of development of adventure tourism.</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favourable geographic position, • Favourable climate characteristics, • Natural attractions, • Preserved natural resources (national park, protected natural resources), • Rich flora and fauna, • Hospitality of population and positive attitude towards tourists, • Rich cultural and historic heritage, • Recreational content, • Intended and planned building of panoramic paths that connect settlements with mountainous surroundings • Forming clusters of adventure tourism according to geographic criteria and unique and high-value attractiveness factor (natural attractiveness) • Creating tourist products that will not exist in the closed form or will not exist at all, • Possibilities of including the local economy in development of adventure tourism • Exchange of experience and examples of good practices in the countries of the European Union. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from other South Eastern Europe counties, • Tourism in Serbia depends on external events and global market changes, • Undeveloped tourist image of Serbia. • Lack of foreign and inward direct investments are major threats. Without adequate funding, projects planned for adventure tourism cannot be expected to come to fruition. • Sensitivity of the environment.

Adventure tourism in this part of Serbia can be aligned with cultural tourism (numerous medieval monasteries and churches – Studenica, Mileševa, Sopoćani, Žiča and others), spa and rural tourism. Apart from the aforementioned mountains, the *Valjevo Mountains* must be mentioned as well (Povlen 1,346 m, Jablanik 1,274 m, Medvednik 1,247 and Maljen 1,103 m), as part of the Peripannonian rim of Serbia. The mountains are characterised by numerous speleological forms, and dissection of relief (canyons), so they are suitable for speleotourism, free climbing, paragliding, mountain biking, kayaking (the Drina) and other activities.

The previous analysis enables the determining of the widest context of activities in order to improve adventure tourism in Serbia and to develop competitive advantages. The performed SWOT analysis aims to point to internal weaknesses, so the process of changing them should immediately be initiated. At the same time, it points to strengths that also need specific activities intended to keep them at the existing level, i.e. for further improving of adventure tourism in Serbia. The general aim of the SWOT analysis of adventure tourism in Serbia is to minimise weaknesses along with a simultaneous increase of strengths, and to use, as well as possible, the chances to diminish the threats from the surroundings.

6. Conclusions

Adventure tourism is an important part of the tourism market in the world because more and more people want an active holiday. Adventure sports can be developed throughout Serbia, but the most suitable destinations are the mountains of eastern, southwestern and western Serbia.

According to the Tourism Development Strategy of Serbia, the segment of adventure tourism is included in the combination of special interests, identified as one of the tourist products of priority that Serbia should invest in, because with regard to the natural resources of Serbia, there is excellent potential for development of this tourist product. Unfortunately, development of adventure tourism does not draw much attention – it is not even mentioned in the Law on Tourism of the

Republic of Serbia. Few agencies have adventure packages on offer. Adventure activities are usually organised by rafting clubs and youth organisations, which is contrary to the law.

In order to promote and develop adventure tourism, it is necessary to establish a firmer functional link between the Sector for Tourism of the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and the Tourist Organisation of Serbia and local tourist agencies. Mountaineering societies, sports clubs and non-governmental organisations should be supported in promoting this type of tourism. The identification of the key sites that would represent the real backbone of adventure tourism development in Serbia is necessary in the coming period. One of the main obstacles to development is the lack of accommodation capacity (primarily hostels and camps). An extenuating circumstance is that there are numerous rural households in the mountainous area of Serbia that can direct their capacity towards tourism development. The remaining limiting factors refer to the poor cooperation of the public and private sector, the state and the local authorities, insufficient education of the local community about the importance of tourism, and adventure tourism in this case. Adequate marketing is missing. The main marketing in the future should be on the internet, i.e. web portals of adventure tourism.

Serbia has rich natural tourist potential. With a favourable traffic and geographic position, there is a good basis for development of adventure tourism, especially since this type of tourism does not require large investments. Apart from the employment effects and tourism development in the inner and mountainous parts of Serbia, adventure tourism would be highly important for the promotion of Serbia in the world. Development of this type of tourism would make other creative entrepreneurs interested in using the natural resources that have been completely unused so far.

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