EXAMINING THE SUPPORT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE MINING TOURISM

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Abstract

There is an increasing interest in mines and facilities related to the mining and industrial heritage perceived as tourist attractions on the global scale. Mining tourism, as a specific tourist segment within the industrial heritage tourism, diversifies a largely standardised tourist offer, providing tourists with a different experience and aesthetics of the landscape. Mining tourism has the potential to improve the social, economic and environmental elements of the local community, as well as to expand the development of tourism within the regional scale. This study aims to examine the support of the local community for the development of mining tourism in the context of sustainable development. This topic is up to date as it deals with a specific relation between the local community and tourism. Mining tourism has the potential to enhance the development of sites which are otherwise not so attractive to tourists.

Key Words**:** *heritage, mining tourism, sustainable development, support, Bor, Serbia*
JEL classification: *Z32, Q01, Q56*

Introduction

The unique characteristic of mining is the ability to shape the space and local community with a set of functions that are specific to many mining areas around the globe (Ballard & Banks, 2003). Essential characteristics of the mining areas are geographical, economic and social isolation,

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adverse effects on the natural environment, the presence of massive objects and infrastructure that influence the landscape and an active workers' movement. Mining communities differ; thus generalisations should be avoided (Veiga et al., 2001; Leadbeater, 2008).

Industrial heritage tourism studies the development of tourist activities, with the focus on the buildings and landscapes that originate from earlier periods of intensive industrialisation. Mining tourism is part of broader industrial heritage tourism, which deals with the history of mining and mining settlements (Edwards & Llurdes, 1996; Nuryanti, 1996).

The value of mining tourism is not based on its artistic significance, but in the cultural and historical context, it acts as a witness to industrial processes that have reshaped society. The mines transform landscapes, so it is interesting for tourists to see the change in the authenticity of the geographic area by a man, which usually includes a visit to the mining facilities as well. Sustainable development in the context of mining does not call into question the long-term economic justification of resource extraction; however, it focuses attention on measures against negative social and environmental consequences (Kumah, 2006). This concept ensures minimum sustainability if mining is used to provide funds as an incentive for economic development.

Mines and factories are not just ordinary working places, but also an opinion, and beliefs exchange centers and origins of subculture inherent only for mining areas. Local communities that describe themselves as mining communities express miner's romanticism based on a constant reminder of the harsh working conditions in mines and nurture a unique attitude towards mining areas accordingly. The mining heritage has high emotional value for them and creates a closed subculture that is defined by beliefs and a particular value system.

This paper aims to examine to what extent local population perceives the relation between different aspects of sustainability and the support of the overall sustainability of mining tourism. The results of the research can help organisations and individuals interested in tourism development, with a particular emphasis on the mining heritage tourism, in the creation of a tourist offer and its promotion, and consequently on improving the quality of life of the local community.

The historical context of the study

Serbia's mining heritage is inextricably linked with the period of socialism, when the ruling party structure favoured the development of heavy industry, the construction of megalomanic industrial objects with the aim of impressing the working class and creating a sense of pride.

The territory of the City of Bor (Figure 1) is located in the central part of eastern Serbia. The area of the city is 856 km², and in this respect, it can be regarded as one of the larger cities in Serbia. In 14 settlements of the city there are 55,817 inhabitants.

Figure 1: *City of Bor*

Source: *Retrieved from http://tobor.rs/turisticka-ponuda/*

The development of mining in this area has existed since ancient times, but considerable exploitation of copper starts in 1902 when engineer Franjo Šistek performs field prospecting. Over time Bor becomes a multinational and multi-confessional environment in which various ethnic groups coexist. During the World War II, the copper in Bor was massively used by the Germans. Following the war, city rapidly expanded and became a mining and industrial centre of the national, European and world importance. By the mid-1990s, RTB Bor employed about 14,000 workers. In addition to mining and metallurgy, other economic branches and social activities were developed, so Bor became the economic, educational, health, cultural and sports centre of eastern Serbia.

Sustainability of mining tourism

Sustainable tourism development is a long-term approach that ensures economic and social growth without compromising the environment, with a fair distribution of costs and benefits. The support of the local population for achieving sustainability is essential to ensure the long-term development of tourism. Several studies suggest that it is impossible to sustain the tourism of a particular destination without the support and participation of the local community (Ahn et al., 2002; Twinning-Ward & Butler, 2002; McCool et al., 2001; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004).

Tourism that is based on the essential characteristics of the local community has become a viable option for the development of passive regions, because tourism provides economic benefits for the local population (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Marinković et al., 2017), promotes a destination (Boo & Busser, 2006) and allows visitors to have high-quality experience (Shrestha et al., 2007).

Social sustainability

In the social context, mining is associated with the exploitation of miners and the difficult life of their families. Mines do not provide only jobs, but they also act as community gathering points of culture specific to the mining region. For a particular area, monuments and artefacts are not the sole elements of its history, but also people and local community whose lives, energy and customs have made these spaces they are today (ERIH, 2001a). Jones and Munday (2001) highlight the importance of mining in terms of specific systems of attitudes and values that include religion, customs and language.

Tourism based on mining heritage enables preservation and understanding of complex social legacy, providing the opportunity for the local community to rejoin and celebrate its past (Dicks, 1999; Harvie, 2002). Hospers (2002) indicates that the development of tourism and the creation of industrial heritage attractions can enhance the pride of the local community with their history (Dimitrovski et al., 2017). The change in the way mining landscapes transform from the place of production to the place of consumption also lead to significant cultural changes that require adjustment. The focus on the number of tourists and profitability led to the emergence of entertainment, while education as an essential part of the offer of mining heritage tourism is neglected. Therefore, it is

necessary to make the right balance between the economic objectives, tourists and expectations of local population.

Overton (1999) argues that the social elements of sustainability have not received the importance they deserve. His discussion on social sustainability encompasses the extent to which communities have control over the development which occurs in their local community, with the aim of gaining insights on why tourism in a region is not sustainable in practice.

An important element of the social sustainability of mining areas is the involvement of the local community in the establishment and functioning of the museum of mining heritage. The existence of a mining museum allows employment of former miners and descendants of miners as guides in a museum or during the guided visit to the mine. They can transfer their knowledge to tourism workers by adapting their life stories about the development of the mining community following the demands of tourists. Jones and Munday (2001) describe the efficiency of the involvement of former miners as guides within the mining tourism. In this way, the importance of local "experts" is recognised, while contacts with the local community are strengthened (Sandell, 2003).

For the development of mining tourism, it is also important to provide support to political factors, to ensure the political and economic certainty of its further development. In this process, it is necessary that the local population take part in the decision-making process, with the possibility to share their experiences, skills and knowledge. Many mining companies have the interest to be responsible towards the local population, and they are more and more aware of the need to reduce conflict with critical stakeholders (Black, 2006; Kapelus, 2002). According to the previous, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Perceptions of the local population regarding social sustainability benefits affect the support for mining tourism sustainable development

Ecological sustainability

Mining communities throughout the world share the heritage of degradation of the natural environment (Mayer & Greenberg, 2001; Bridge, 2004; Leadbeater, 2008). Mining has a significant impact on human environment that extends far beyond a pit, and it is in particular

related to air, land, surface water supply pollution, as well as severe and long-term effects on the health of local population. Long-standing problems of the pollution of the environment of these areas negatively affect the attractiveness of mining destinations (Mayer & Greenberg, 2001). In the regions where mining remains a productive industry, the balance between mining and environmental protection and the health of the local population is difficult to achieve.

It may seem absurd that mining areas have some ecological value and should be protected, especially if we observe antagonism concerning the current state and untouched nature from the pre-mining phase (Jansen-Verbeke, 1999). There is a legal obligation to restore the surface used for mining after the completion of the exploitation, however some authors (Alfrey & Putnam, 1992; Leary & Sholes, 2000) warn that returning to the appearance of the period before mining will erase the evidence of industrial past and existence of its activities will be removed from geographical environment. Removing mines from a specific area can lead to the deletion of evidence of the presence of a former dominant activity in the minds of future generations and deletes a close link between the geographical area and the local community. The argument confirms this notion that mines should remain where they are, as an authentic part of broader environment.

Protecting and restoring the natural environment that has been degraded by the development of mining is an essential aspect of mining tourism development, as the local population will regain respect for the natural environment as an important and valuable resource. A limited regeneration of a natural setting creates publicity about broader social engagement, promoting areas that have radically changed as a result of human activity, and now again contains visually attractive landscapes. The traditional sense of aesthetics has in the past denied any value concerning untouched nature-mining exploitation, and today a new image of mining areas in the minds of future tourists is created regarding the mining heritage and natural environment. In terms of nature protection, holistic planning approaches are recommended, which involve the bonding of mining tourist attractions with a direct natural environment.

Garfield (1990) proposes bonding multiple sites of industrial heritage to creating industrial and mining heritage routes (ERIH, 2001a, 2001b). Alongside these routes, tourists follow the phase change of the environment from untouched nature to its final change to the present

purpose. The example of Bor shows the readiness to combine the attractions of the mining heritage with the natural beauty of the immediate natural environment such as Borsko jezero (the Lake of Bor), Brestovačka Banja, Crni Vrh, Lazarev kanjon (Lazar's Canyon), Zlotska pećina (the cave of Zlot) and Dubašnica, creating a tourist offer of diverse content that can be directed towards a wider range of tourists. Therefore it is recommended that the authenticity of the mining areas could be connected with excursions to unspoiled nature in the immediate environment. In this way, tourists will be able to understand the relationship between nature and the man, as part of the historical, life and natural cycle.

H2: Perceptions of the local population regarding environmental sustainability benefits affect the support for mining tourism sustainable development

Economic sustainability

Dale (2002) and Veiga et al. (2001) define mining community as a community of people especially affected by mining as a business. Mining cities are characterised by high dependence on the mining industry, thanks to which a city owes its survival (Stephenson & Wray, 2005). Mining communities are usually located in areas that are economically and physically peripheral to large urban areas. In these mining communities, physical distance also contributes to economic marginalisation, especially in the situation when a mine is closed or when it reduces production, so in this situation, they seek alternative economic activities (Maude & Hugo, 1992; Veiga et al., 2001).

One of the economic alternatives to mining areas is the development of tourism, and in particular, the development of mining heritage-based tourism that combines social and natural elements. The development of tourism has proved successful at numerous locations through the presentation of the mining heritage (Dicks, 2000; Edward & Llurdes 1996; Wanhill, 2000). Mining tourism allows greater employment, providing an alternative to life on social subsidy. The development of mining tourism leads to the creation of a new image of Bor as a city, the city with a higher quality of life, greater employment and active protection of natural and cultural values in the function of tourism development.

The future development of mining communities must be based on the diversification of the economy towards projects promoting mining tourism. The development of tourism projects also supports local business initiatives, with the aim of providing an alternative to the monopoly of the mining sector, lowering the dependency of the local community with the mining. The authentic ambience of industrial and mining heritage provides the opportunity to promote these attractions to tourists. By enhancing the image of the mining area, especially in the ecological and social aspect, the industrial heritage has the capacity to generate the income and attract the new investments to the city (Hospers, 2002).

A local community that plans and uses tourism as an alternative way of fostering economic development must develop sustainable tourism that can meet the needs and demands of its inhabitants (Puczkó & Rátz, 2000). A sustainable approach to the development of mining heritage tourism must stimulate a proactive attitude toward wider economic growth and in this way acts as a catalyst for positive economic change (Hospers, 2002). The reuse of industrial landscapes and buildings nowadays is a standard approach within the spatial planning that provides conditions for the economic regeneration of space (ERIH, 2001b). Thanks to the ERIH organisation which promotes tourist activities around industrial monuments (anchor points), the development planning initiative for abandoned industrial landscapes is initiated through the concept of sustainable development, raising people's awareness of the quality of a human-centred environment (ERIH, 2001b).

There are also negative aspects of the development of tourism based on the mining heritage. The direct economic benefit of mining tourism is overestimated, because mining tourism is a small tourist segment, and as such attracts only daily visitors (Hospers, 2002). Consequently, the economic benefit is limited to visits to the mining museum and catering and commercial buildings in the immediate vicinity (Hospers, 2002; Walton, 2002). Apart from attracting only a specific profile of tourists, it is crucial to understand the seasonal character, as benefits related to the employees are limited because seasonal employment can not wholly replace the unemployment that occurred after the closure of the mine (Burns, 1993; Stobart & Ball, 1998).

H3: Perceptions of the local population regarding economic sustainability benefits affect the support for mining tourism sustainable development

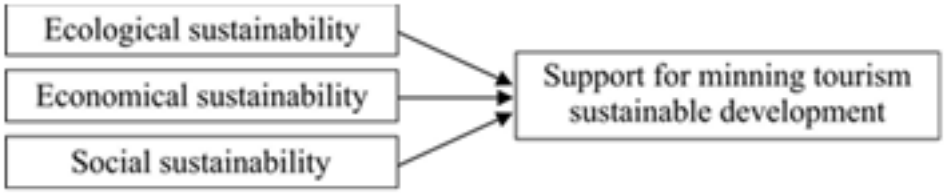
Methodology and result interpretation

Data collection and sample

The research was conducted with the aim of identifying key aspects of the sustainability of mining tourism perceived by the local population. The questionnaire includes statements related to the sustainability dimensions of mining tourism: social, economic and environmental sustainability. The research model (Figure 2) used for empirical research includes four variables: social, economic and ecological sustainability, and support for the sustainable development of mining tourism. Independent variables are social, economic and environmental sustainability, while the dependent variable is support for sustainable development of mining tourism. The survey was conducted on a sample of 120 respondents, local community members from the mining city of Bor, Serbia. When sampling strategy was formulated, it was taken into account that the sample comprised approximately the same number of women and men, varying degrees of education and various occupations, and encircle respondents of different age categories ranging from 18 to 70 years.

The structure of the sample (Table 1) consists of 40.8% of male and 59.2% of female respondents. The majority of respondents belong to the age groups of 21-25 years (34.2%), and 36-45 years (26.9%), whereas 25% of the respondents are between 26-35 years of age. The smallest number of the respondents were in the age groups of 46-55 years (7.5%), up to 20 (4.2%) and over 60 years of age (2.5%). If the level of education was analysed, 40.0% of the respondents have completed secondary education, 30.8% have a university degree, and 28.3% of the respondents have an elementary-level education. When it comes to employment, the sample covers 55% of employees and 45% of the unemployed. Concerning marital status, 55.8% of the respondents are married, and

Figure 2: *Research model*



Source: *Prepared by the authors*

44.2% of the respondents are single. The sample is mostly made up of respondents in various ways involved in mining as a business (65%), while respondents who are not engaged in mining encircle 35% of the total sample.

Table 1: *Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (n=120)*

Gender	Number of the respondents (%)	**Employment**	Number of the respondents (%)
Male	49 (40.8%)	Employed	66 (55.0%)
Female	71 (59.2%)	Unemployed	54 (45.0%)
Age group		**Miners**	
<20	5 (4.2%)	Yes	78 (65.0%)
21-25	41 (34.2%)	No	42 (35.0%)
26-35	30 (25.0%)		
36-45	32 (26.7%)	**Education**	
46-60	9 (7.5%)	Elementary	34 (28.3%)
>60	3 (2.5%)	Secondary	48 (40.0%)
		Higher	1 (8%)
Marital status		Bachelor	37 (30.8%)
Married	67 (55.8%)		
Single	53 (44.2%)		

Source: *Prepared by the authors*

To create a clear and concise questionnaire, a focus group was organised. To propose the questionnaire which will be easy to use, the questionnaire consisted of one printed page. After preparing the questionnaire, the survey was previously tested on a small sample of 20 randomly selected respondents. The results of this pilot study revealed that the statements in the questionnaire were clear and easy to understand and there was no need for any additional changes. With the help of the Tourism Organization of Bor, the questionnaires were distributed to persons employed in the Mining and Smelting Basin Bor and distributed to the local population. The respondents who agreed to participate in the research were given reasonable amount of time to consider their answers. It was decided that the interviewers contact the respondents and collect the questionnaires after a three-day period. Of the total number of 150 distributed surveys, 130 surveys were returned to the interviewers. After that, the questionnaires were examined, and 10 of them were excluded from further analysis, since they were not adequately filled in. Bor is the appropriate research setting because there is an excellent potential for the development of tourism of mining heritage.

Measures

The statements were selected by reviewing the relevant literature. Social sustainability was measured by six items that were isolated from the following studies (Chen & Chen, 2010; Dyer et al., 2007; Kuvan & Akan, 2005; Vargas-Sánchez et al. al., 2009; Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2008; and Choi & Sirakaya, 2005). Economic sustainability was measured by two items that were isolated from the Vargas-Sánchez, et al. (2009) and Dyer et al. (2007). Four items were used for ecological sustainability based on studies done by Kuvan and Akan (2005) and Choi and Sirakaya (2005). The support for the sustainable development of the mining heritage tourism was measured by two items based on the research done by Lee (2013) and Dyer et al., (2007). All items were additionally adapted for this study. The research model is shown in Figure 2. All statements were measured using the Likert scale of five points (1 - I completely disagree, 5 - I completely agree).

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 21.0). As for the statistical analyses used, the authors opted for factor analysis and multiple regression analysis.

Results

Descriptive statistics, i.e. mean values with the standard deviation of all items used in the research are shown in Table 2. Mean values range from 3 to 4, suggesting that there is no significant difference in the perception of the local community towards different dimension of the sustainability. The highest mean value is for the item labelled: *The development of mining tourism should be organized in accordance with the needs of sustainable development in the future (4.55)*, which suggests that the local community members have high awareness of the requirement that tourism development needs to be implemented in a sustainable manner. The lowest mean value is for the item named: *The development of mining tourism contributes to reduced air pollution (3.52)*, which is reasonable as the mining is still active and its pollution cannot be ignored, regardless of tourism development. On the level of the variable, Support for mining tourism sustainable development (4.5) the highest mean values, confirming the local community provide significant support for the development of mining tourism in a sustainable manner. Conversely, the

perception of the local community towards Ecological sustainability (3.66) was found lowest, which suggests that local community have a negative attitude of the ecological effects of mining tourism development, especially in comparison to the other sustainability aspects.

Table 2: *Descriptive statistics*

Items	Total mean	SD
Ecological sustainability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.896)	**3.66**	**0.95**
The development of mining tourism contributes to the reduction of waste	3.65	1.07
The development of mining tourism contributes to reduced air pollution	3.52	1.17
The development of mining tourism affects the growth of green areas and recreation areas	3.73	1.12
Mining tourism protects the environment	3.72	0.99
Economic sustainability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.846)	**4.12**	**0.78**
Mining tourism leads to greater investment and infrastructure improvements	4.20	0.79
Mining tourism leads to an increase in income and living standards	4.03	0.88
Social sustainability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.860)	**3.97**	**0.68**
The development of mining tourism provides easier access to information of local importance	3.82	0.88
The development of mining tourism improves the quality of public services	3.84	0.92
The development of mining tourism raises the quality of the hotel-catering offer	4.19	0.83
The development of mining tourism encourages the local population to stay in the place of residence	4.10	0.90
Mining tourism influences the preservation of national and cultural identity	4.06	0.80
The development of mining tourism improves the educational level of the population	3.79	0.99
Support for mining tourism sustainable development (Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.615)	**4.50**	**0.58**
I consider that my municipality is an attractive destination for the development of mining tourism on a sustainable basis	4.46	0.75
The development of mining tourism should be organized in accordance with the needs of sustainable development in the future	4.55	0.60

Source: *Result findings*

Based on the earlier literature review, the most significant dimensions of sustainability were separated. To investigate if the separated variables have a satisfactory level of internal reliability, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated. The Cronbach alpha coefficient is significant

to acknowledge if the detected variables separated from the literature review were later on usable for multiple regression analysis. Values of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for obtained factors are higher than the required minimum threshold which is 0.6 (Robinson et al., 1991).

Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted with the aim to examine the impact of three independent variables (economic, ecological and social sustainability) to the Support for mining tourism sustainable development (dependent variable). The obtained results shown in Table 3 indicate a significant influence of economic sustainability (ß = 0.318, t = 3.895), while the other two dimensions of the sustainability have found to be non-significant.

Table 3: *Results of multiple regression analysis (dependent variable Support for mining tourism sustainable development)*

Independent variables	ß	t	Sig.
Economic sustainability	0.318	3.895	0.000**
Ecological sustainability	- 0.032	- 0.506	0.614 ns
Social sustainability	0.089	0.854	0.395 ns

Notes: *Significant at p<0.01(**), non-significant(ns); R²=0.227; F=11.368***
Source: *Result findings*

During the implementation of multiple regression analysis, it is desirable to examine whether there is a problem of multicollinearity. Then the issue of multicollinearity can be determined by the calculated value of the VIF. The question of multicollinearity will not occur if the values of the VIF coefficient are less than 5 (Field, 2000). The values of the given coefficient in this study range from 1.63-2.25, which is considered to be adequate values.

Conclusion

Generations that grow up based on information technologies and virtual reality will soon begin to appreciate wider social engagement. Hence, interest in industrial plants and mining communities and their features can be expected to be such as that for cathedrals in historical cities (Harris, 1989).

The conducted research provides a significant contribution to the existing literature by highlighting the connection of various aspects of sustainability and support for sustainable tourism development in the

specific ambience of the local mining community. Similar research has been implemented in a very small number of studies in the field of tourism, and in that sense, the proposed research model is novel. The research findings confirm that there is a significant link between the perception of economic sustainability and support for the sustainable development of tourism, primarily as a result of high expectations of potential economic benefits to the local community that potentially can arise from the development of mining tourism. This result is a consequence of the adverse effects of the global economic crisis, primarily because the study is conceived in a mining community that is mostly dependent on the development of mining, and which has recently been confronted with severe economic problems. Also, the municipality of Bor is among the economically least developed cities in Serbia.

On the other hand, the results of the conducted research did not confirm a significant link in the attitudes of the local population about the benefits of achieving ecological and social sustainability when it comes to supporting sustainable development in the context of the development of mining tourism. It is interesting to point out the fact that the results indicate that the local population views its support for sustainable development exclusively in the context of economic development, while the perception of ecological and social sustainability does not stand out as an important antecedent of the support for the development of mining heritage tourism. The social and economic crisis that is being developed through the crisis of unemployment and the emigration of the young and educated population has a serious impact on the identity of the local community. Tourism has the potential to provide new development opportunities for distant and passive areas. Development of tourism based on industrial heritage, interest in local culture and identity has been raised, enabling the continuity of the mining community (Dicks, 2000).

These research findings point out that development of mining heritage tourism in the future needs to pay particular attention to the emphasis on environmental and social benefits and their importance for improving the quality of life in the local community. Marketing activities must be aimed at improving the quality of tourist experience, but also the quality of life of local population because sustainability is not possible to achieve without support at the local level.

Finally, it is important to point out several limitations of the conducted research. Firstly, the size of the sample was at the lower limit, primarily

as a consequence of apathy and lack of interest of local people to participate in the research. When designing the model, the basic model was based on the main pillars of sustainability, respectively the perception of their benefits, but in future research, it would be desirable to test an advanced model that includes positive and negative aspects of tourism development in the context of achieving sustainable tourism development. Also, future models can consist of some additional variables such as image and social attachment, and different demographic segments can be analysed separately, depending on their income, age, educational structure and inclusion in tourism development.

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