

Stakeholder cooperation in implementation of the sustainable development concept: Montenegrin tourist destinations

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Abstract. The importance of involving diverse stakeholders in tourism planning is receiving growing recognition. Tourism destination planning is a complex process, due to the existence of a wide variety of stakeholders with a wide range of opinions, multiple problem visions and different interests. Despite the complexity of the planning process one feature acknowledged for successful destination management planning is high level of stakeholder cooperation. The paper examines the level of stakeholder cooperation on the specific example of the sustainable development concept implementation in Montenegrin tourism. It starts with two hypotheses: first, the development level of instruments for managing tourist destination depends on stakeholder cooperation level in a particular destination, and second, implementation of the sustainable development concept is positively correlated with the development of instruments for managing tourist destination. The results have indicated poor implementation of tourism development plans and low level of stakeholder cooperation.

Keywords: stakeholder collaboration, sustainable development, tourism destination, tourism destination, development planning, Montenegro.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the past years, implementation of destination management has increased dramatically in global tourism development overall. The actuality of this issue stems from two facts: *first*, global market trends change the modern society, creating new values and setting new demands for providers of tourism products, and *second*, tourism becomes an integral part of the overall development sustainability planning, and thus the implementation of this concept has become a necessity in developing tourist destinations. For Montenegro, this issue is especially significant in the context of joining the EU. Establishing effective management of

tourist destinations on the principles of sustainability and partnership, in accordance with the recommendations of the European Union, could lead to better positioning of Montenegro on European tourist market. Stakeholder cooperation is believed to be an essential prerequisite for efficient management of tourist destinations, and its sustainable development (Carey, 1997; Swarbrooke, 1999; Cooper et al., 2005; Williams, 2001; Samrat, 2011). Stakeholder cooperation in developing a tourism development policy for a destination contributes to the promotion of innovative processes through knowledge exchange among stakeholders, whereas documents for determining a joint development policy create the sense of "shared ownership" over the results of development policy, which, if successful, are an additional motive for continual cooperation.

The objective of our empirical research here was to determine the stakeholder cooperation level in implementation of the sustainable development concept of Montenegrin tourist destinations. Since stakeholder cooperation is believed to be an essential prerequisite for the efficient management of a tourist destination and its sustainable development, the second objective was to examine the relation between stakeholder cooperation and implementation of instruments for managing destination development (strategic, marketing, operational planning, marketing communications and distribution, monitoring success, and continuous education of tourism development). The third objective of this study was to examine the relation between the sustainable development concept (Streimikiene et al., 2016) and the instruments applied in managing tourism destination development.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

During the period 01 October - 30 November 2016 primary research was conducted on a sample of 19 destinations about stakeholder cooperation in tourist destinations in Montenegro. Respondents were representatives of stakeholders in tourist destinations. Out of 130 sent questionnaire, 117 (90%) were collected.

In the questionnaire, on a scale from one to five according to the management instruments, the respondents were asked to assess the condition of stakeholder cooperation in the destination, and according to the following fields of cooperation: planning in the destination, product development, market communication and distribution, monitoring success, and acquisition of a new knowledge (Skackauskienė et al., 2017; Popov et al., 2016; Panikarova & Vlasov, 2016). Each field was described in detail and divided into individual sub-fields. Thus, the planning was divided into sub-questions: active participation in the process of making plans on destination development, decision-making in adopting plans, and supervision of implementation plans. Cooperation in the product development and infrastructure was divided into the following sub-groups of cooperation: the tourist attraction development in the destination, the introduction of novelties into the tourist offer, developing/upgrading accommodation, ecology and environment, and cultural heritage protection (Sueldo & Streimikiene, 2016; Yerznkyan et al., 2017), the introduction of quality standards in the destination, arranging the destination (beaches, green areas, etc.), improvement of transport infrastructure, improvement of public services (public transport, health care and safety). Cooperation in communication with the market and the distribution includes: market research, improving destination image, advertising and public relations, organizing study tours for journalists and agents, making the destination promotional materials, e-marketing of the destination, as well as sub-fields of cooperation. Monitoring touristic performance in the destination was divided into the following fields: collecting and distributing information related to tourist trade, customer satisfaction survey, competitive analysis (Bite Fominiene, 2016), and benchmarking analysis. As the last instrument of management, the continuous

acquisition of new knowledge (Jovovic et al., 2016; Skačkauskienė et al., 2017) was divided into sub-questions: organizing seminars and workshops, as well as joint study tours.

For testing the correlation of cooperation between stakeholder groups (independent variable) and management instruments (dependent variable), as well as the correlation between sustainable development and management tools, was based on Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Dependent variables on the development degree of management instruments have been obtained by the first questionnaire, while the independent variables have been collected by applying the second questionnaire. The survey results were processed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, a program for data analysis. The statistical method used for data processing was a correlation analysis. Research has shown an insufficient development of the tourist destinations in Montenegro. Generally, the respondents have rated the stakeholder cooperation in a field of tourism development in the destination by an average grade of 3.06. Quality of cooperation was further evaluated according to the fields of cooperation, or the management instruments on a numerical scale from one to five (1 - bad, 5 - excellent).

Table 1

Mean grade values of stakeholder cooperation

	Number of respondents	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Overall condition of cooperation	17	3,06	0,937
FIELD OF COOPERATION			
Planning	17	2,88	1,182
Product development	17	3,12	0,963
Promotion and distribution	17	3,59	1,088
Measuring the performance	17	3,18	0,856
Education	17	3,41	1,148

Source: own calculation

Mean value of overall grades are ranged from 2.88 to 3.59. The best-rated is cooperation in the field of communication with the market and distribution (mean grade 3.59), while the worst-rated is cooperation in the field of planning (mean grade 2.88). Relatively low grade of cooperation in the field of success monitoring (Table 1) indicates a poor exchange of information between participants in destination management, which would allow better monitoring of activity effects in the destination. The main limitations for better cooperation (Table 2) have been singled out according to their importance. Respondents have assessed those limitations from 1 to 5 (1 – the most important, 5 – the least important).

Table 2

Constraints rank for better stakeholder cooperation

Constraints	Number of destinations	Median	Upper quartile
Lack of planning documents	17	3	4
Under-developed channels of communication	17	3	4
Various interests	17	2	3
Absence of formal forms of cooperation	17	4	5
Absence of a coordinator of activities	17	3	5

Source: own calculation

Many authors (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Liu, 2003) point out that the key element for maintaining the sustainable development of tourism is overcoming the subordination among stakeholders (tourists, local community, public and private tourist sector, local, regional and national management structures) which can be realized through coordination and balance of their interests, and applying strategic development plans that would respect these interests.

Analyzed by regions (Table 3), the overall condition of cooperation is approximately similar to rated at the general level, with a somewhat better rated in the Coastal region (mean grade of 3.33), and somewhat lower in the North region (mean grade 2.71). Observed by certain fields, the cooperation in a field of acquiring new knowledge is best evaluated in the Central region (mean grade 3.75), while in the Coastal region cooperation in all other fields is somewhat better than in other regions.

Table 3

Mean grades of stakeholder cooperation by regions

Regions (number of destinations)	Overall condition of cooperation	Fields of cooperation				
		Planning	Product development	Promotion and distribution	Monitoring success	Education
	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)
Northern (7)	2,71 (1,253)	2,71 (1,496)	2,71 (1,113)	3,29 (1,380)	2,57 (0,787)	3,00 (1,414)
Central (4)	3,25 (0,500)	2,50 (1,000)	2,75 (0,500)	3,50 (0,577)	3,25 (0,500)	3,75 (0,957)
Coastal (6)	3,33 (0,816)	3,33 (1,033)	3,83 (0,753)	4,00 (1,095)	3,83 (0,753)	3,67 (1,033)

Source: own calculation

Kruskal-Wallis test has been used for the research of statistical difference in the cooperation between the destination stakeholders by region, as like in the previous management instruments.

Table 4

Difference in stakeholders' cooperation in tourism destinations by regions (Kruskal-Wallis test)

Cooperation	K-W	p
Overall cooperation	2,009	0,366
Fields of cooperation		
Planning	1,197	0,550
Product development	4,970	0,083
Promotion and distribution	1,334	0,513
Monitoring success	6,578	0,037
Education	1,125	0,570

Source: own calculation

Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 4) has demonstrated that there is no statistically significant difference between the regions in stakeholder cooperation when the condition of cooperation between the destination stakeholders ($p=0.366$) is generally assessed. Also, measured by the fields of cooperation, in planning

($p=0.550$), product development ($p=0.083$), communication with the market and distribution ($p=0.513$), and acquisition of new knowledge ($p=0.570$), does not show a statistically significant difference between the regions. However, in terms of cooperation in the field of monitoring success, the Kruskal-Wallis test has shown statistically significant gap between the regions ($p=0.037$).

Research of the perception of cooperation of all destination stakeholders was conducted in the second phase in order to obtain more detailed insight of the condition of stakeholder cooperation in the destination. Again, the questionnaire has been used as a research instrument. The respondents ($n=117$) were asked to assess the condition of stakeholder cooperation in the destination (on a scale from 1 - bad to 5 – excellent) according to the management instruments, or according to certain fields of cooperation (planning, development products, communication with the market and distribution, monitoring success, continuous acquisition of new knowledge). Each field has been described in detail and divided into individual sub-fields.

The field of *planning* (Table 5) has been evaluated the stakeholder cooperation in the process of making plans for the tourist destination development, in the process of deciding on the plans acceptance, and monitoring of the implementation of the plans.

Table 5

Stakeholder cooperation in tourism planning

	Involvement in creating plan documents	Involvement in deciding on the plans acceptance	Monitoring of the implementation of plans
Arithmetic mean	2.96	2.85	2.76
Standard deviation	1.235	1.172	1.172
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mod	3.00	3.00	3.00
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00
Percentile 25	2.00	2.00	2.00
50	3.00	3.00	3.00
75	4.00	4.00	3.50

Source: own calculation

Arithmetic mean of *cooperation in the process of making destination plans* was 2.96 with a standard deviation of 1.235. *Cooperation in the process of deciding on the plans acceptance* has been assessed an arithmetic mean 2.85, while the standard deviation is 1.172. *Cooperation in monitoring of the implementation of plans* was evaluated slightly worse than the previous two planning sub-fields, or an arithmetic mean 2.76, while the standard deviation is 1.172. In *cooperation in communication with the market and the distribution*, the best evaluated was the production of promotional materials (arithmetic mean 4.04), and e-marketing.

Cooperation in the field of monitoring success of tourism in the destination was researched through the questionnaire on cooperation in collecting and distributing of data on tourism turnover, competitiveness analysis, and benchmarking analysis. The research results are presented in Table 6.

Cooperation in the field of continuous acquisition of new knowledge included the assessment of *cooperation in the organization of seminars and workshops*, and *joint study trips*. The research results are shown in Table 7. The cooperation assessment in the organization of seminars and workshop is ranging from 1 to 5, the arithmetic mean is 2.38, and the standard deviation is 1.104. The cooperation assessment in the organization of joint study trips is ranging from 1 to 5, the arithmetic mean is 2.09, and the standard deviation is 1.047.

Table 6

Stakeholder cooperation and monitoring success of tourism in the destination

Field of cooperation	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Median (mod)	Min (max)	Percentile		
				25	50	75
Analysis of tourism turnover	3.87 (1.256)	4.00 (5.00)	1 (5)	3	4	5
Competitiveness analysis	3.26 (1.307)	3.00 (3.00)	1 (5)	2	3	4
Benchmarking analysis	2.96 (1.335)	3.00 (2.00)	1 (5)	2	3	4

Source: own calculation

Table 7

Stakeholder cooperation and education

Field of cooperation	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Median (mod)	Min (max)	Percentile		
				25	50	75
Organization of seminars, workshops	2.77 (1.398)	3.00 (1.00)	1 (5)	1	3	4
Joint study visits	2.38 (1.188)	3.00 (3.00)	1 (5)	1	3	3

Source: own calculation

Cooperation in the field of product development and infrastructure was divided into the following sub-fields: tourist attraction development in the destination, introducing novelties in tourist offer, development/improvement of accommodation capacities, environmental protection, protection of cultural heritage, introduction of quality standards in the destination, arranging destinations (beaches, green areas, etc.), improvement of transport infrastructure, improving public services (public transport, health care, and safety). The research results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Stakeholder cooperation in the field of product development and infrastructure

Field of cooperation	Arithmetic mean (st. deviation)	Median (mod)	Min (max)	Percentile	
				25	75
Tourist attraction development	3.21(1.065)	3(3)	1(5)	2.5	4
Creating of innovative products and services	3.32(0.997)	3(3)	1(5)	3	4
Improvements of accommodation offer	3.44(0.914)	3(3)	2(5)	3	4
Environmental protection	3.03(0.969)	3(3)	1(5)	2	4
Protection of cultural heritage	3.22(1.161)	3(3)	1(5)	2	4
Introduction of quality standards	3.18(0.943)	3(3)	1(5)	3	4
Arranging destinations	3.18(1.031)	3(3)	1(5)	2	4
Improvement of transport infrastructure	3.01(0.951)	3(3)	1(5)	2	4
Improving public services	2.91(0.974)	3(3)	1(5)	2	3

Source: own calculation

For the purposes of proving the hypothesis that the development level of instruments managing the tourist destination depends on the level of cooperation between stakeholders, and further statistical analysis has been conducted based on information provided by the research results. Spearman's rank correlation

coefficient showed a statistically significant correlation between stakeholder cooperation and plans implementation. Cooperation in the field of planning statistically significantly correlates with the total plans implementation (Table 9). Correlation is positive, medium strong ($r_s=0.777$; $p=0.01$). The same result is obtained and when it comes to cooperation at general level, and it also significantly correlates with the overall implementation plans ($r_s=0.534$; $p=0.027$).

Table 9

Correlation between stakeholder cooperation and plans implementation

Cooperation	Overall implementation		Tourism development plan		Marketing plan		Promotional activities plan	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
In general	0,534	0,027	0,597	0,011	0,507	0,038	0,658	0,004
Area of planning	0,777	0,01	0,582	0,014	0,699	0,002	0,555	0,021

Source: own calculation

Analysis of correlation between stakeholder cooperation and communication with the market (Table 10) has shown a statistically significant positive, medium strong correlation both at the general level of cooperation ($r_s=0.555$; $p=0.021$) and at the cooperation level in the field of communication with the market and distribution ($r_s=0.571$; $p=0.017$).

Table 10

Correlation between stakeholder cooperation and promotion

Cooperation	r_s	p
In general	0,555	0,021
Area of promotion	0,571	0,017

Source: own calculation

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Table 11) has shown a statistically significant, positive, strong correlation between stakeholder cooperation and monitoring success ($r_s=0.905$; $p=0.01$), whereas at the general level of cooperation this correlation is relatively weak ($r_s=0.484$; $p=0.049$).

Table 11

Correlation between stakeholder cooperation and monitoring success

Cooperation	Monitoring success (overall)		Analysis of tourism turnover		Analysis of guests satisfaction		Competitiveness analysis		Benchmarking analysis	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
In general	0,484	0,049	0,654	0,004	0,489	0,047	0,581	0,014	0,439	0,078
By areas	0,905	0,01	0,477	0,053	0,550	0,022	0,854	0,01	0,748	0,01

Source: own calculation

In analyzing the correlation stakeholder cooperation and assessing the sufficiency rating of education (Table 12), Spearman's rank correlation coefficient has shown a statistically significant positive correlation,

as following: medium strong correlation at the general level of cooperation ($r_s=0.598$; $p=0.011$), and strong correlation when it comes to cooperation only in the field of continuous acquisition of new knowledge ($r_s=0.925$; $p=0.01$).

Table 12

Correlation between stakeholder cooperation and sufficiency rating of education

Cooperation	Sufficiency rating of education and training	
	r_s	p
In general	0,598	0,011
By areas	0,925	0,01

Source: own calculation

This paper starts with an assumption that the implementation of sustainable development concept positively correlates with the development degree of instruments for managing tourist destination. Having established that the development level of instruments for managing tourist destination depends on the level of cooperation between stakeholders, further statistical analysis was conducted based on information provided by the research. Using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient, the correlation between the implication of the concept of sustainable development and evaluation of development of instruments for managing the development of tourist destinations has been analyzed.

Spearman's correlation coefficient (Table 13) has shown a statistically significant correlation between the implementation of sustainable development concept and plans implementation at the general level of implementation. At the level of individual plans implementation, a significant correlation exists in the tourism development plan implementation ($r_s=0.679$; $p=0.003$). This management instrument is also evaluated as the most important for the implementation of the sustainable development concept, which is by its nature a long-term and remains unattainable if not "instilled" into the planning.

Table 13

Correlation between the concept of sustainable development and plans implementation

Sustainable development	Overall implementation		Tourism development plan		Marketing plan		Promotional activities plan	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Rating of applying the concept	0,499	0,041	0,679	0,003	0,391	0,121	0,271	0,292

Source: own calculation

A statistically significant correlation exists between the implementation of the sustainable development concept and communication with the market (Table 14), and between the implementation of the sustainable development concept and assessment of the sufficiency rating of education for the purpose of managing the tourism development at the destination level (Table 15).

Table 14

Correlation between the concept of sustainable development and promotion

Sustainable development	r_s	p
Promotion	0,650	0,01

Table 15

Correlation between the concept of sustainable development and education

Sustainable development	Sufficiency rating of education	
	r_s	p
Education and training	0,781	0,01

Table 16

Correlation between the concept of sustainable development and monitoring success

Sustainable development	Monitoring success (overall)		Analysis of tourism turnover		Analysis of guests satisfaction		Competitiveness analysis		Benchmarking analysis	
	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p	r_s	p
Monitoring success	0,563	0,019	0,564	0,018	0,547	0,023	0,334	0,190	0,362	0,153

Source: own calculation

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Table 16) has shown a statistically significant positive correlation between the sustainable development concept and assessment of monitoring success on the overall level of monitoring success ($r_s=0.563$; $p=0.019$), as well as the analysis of tourism turnover ($r_s=0.564$; $p=0.018$) and the analysis of guests satisfaction ($r_s=0.547$; $p=0.023$). In the analysis of competitiveness and benchmarking, the correlation is positive but not statistically significant.

3. CONCLUSION

Statistical analysis has shown a positive and significant correlation with the management instruments. Thus, the conclusion suggests that the development level of instruments for managing tourist destination depends on the level of stakeholder cooperation in the destination.

Planning of tourism development is carried out in Montenegrin tourist destinations. The largest parts are related to the promotional activities (94.1%), and the tourism development plan (70.6%), while marketing plan enjoys the smallest share (41.2%). The plans are not fully implemented. Average grade of their implementation are ranging from 3 to 3.71. Marketing plans (arithmetic mean 3.71) and promotional activity plans (arithmetic mean 3.68) are implemented slightly better than the tourism development plans (arithmetic mean 3.00).

The major limitations to the implementation are in the long-term tourist development plans, which require greater involvement of the public sector and higher degree of stakeholder cooperation in capital investment projects. The respondents believe that the major limitations to the plans implementation are a lack of funds and human resources constraints, as well as a lack of product development strategy.

Research has shown that the stakeholder cooperation in the tourist destinations of Montenegro is underdeveloped (3.06). In addition, the cooperation between destination stakeholders in the planning has

been rated the lowest (2.88). According to respondents, the cause of poor cooperation is primarily a lack of documentation for tourism development plan, underdeveloped communication channels, separate interests, a lack of formal forms of cooperation, and finally, the last but certainly not least important, a lack of leadership or activity coordinators.

The results have indicated a positive correlation between stakeholder cooperation and managerial instruments, which is statistically significant. This verifies the hypothesis that the development level of instruments for managing tourist destination depends on the level of stakeholder cooperation in the destination. Also, research has confirmed that the implementation of the sustainable development concept is positively correlated with the development degree of instruments for managing tourist destination. A statistically significant correlation exists between the implementation of the sustainable development concept and planned implementation at the overall implementation level.

The results of an empirical research have indicated the weaknesses of managing the development of tourist destinations in Montenegro. They confirmed that the economically rational, socially responsible, and commercially acceptable routing of destination development requires stakeholder's access to managing sustainable development of tourist destinations.

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