**DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE NATIONAL PARK GALICICA**

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Abstract

Contemporary tourism development shows a shift of tourism demand towards highly specialized and sustainable tourism forms. This arises from the expanding environmental awareness among tourists and providers of tourism services during the last decade. Tourism destinations become more and more oriented towards attracting tourists who pursuit services and products of higher quality. On the other hand, destinations tend to facilitate the protection of natural and cultural tourism resources from excessive exploitation and devastation that arises from the saturation during a concentrated and relatively short tourism season. That can only be achieved through diverting the strategic developmental directions of tourism from the traditional "mass-tourism" forms towards new and more sustainable types of tourism. Such an example is the region of the National Park "Galicica" in the Ohrid area in the Republic of Macedonia. This region represents the most developed tourism region in the country with numerous quality natural and cultural resources concentrated on a relatively small area as well as the highest number of registered tourists' visits. Therefore, a real threat exists from the tourists that visit the region themselves, as well as the actions from the tourism offer to satisfy their needs. One of these tourism types that are based on sustainable development and that show great potential for development in this region represents geo-tourism. This type of tourism can be a great opportunity for developing a quality tourism brand.

Keywords: *Sustainable tourism, tourism development, geotourism, national parks, geo-parks*.

# 1. Introduction

Geo-tourism is a relatively modern form of tourism which exhibits significant potential for development in the future. It represents a segment of tourism which had significant development around the world in recent years. Initial researches about geo-tourism as well as the first definitions derive from the UK but from day to day the field of research is expanding in other regions of the world and it gains international character by the scientific community. The term itself began to be used in the early 90’s of the XX century, but the beginnings of the practical application can even be seen as early as the XVII century. It can be said that people from ancient times have visited the so called “geological wonders”, such as mountains, caves, volcanoes, fossils, canyons and so on. It should be noted that only in recent years a market for this type of tourism has begun to develop with its own specific and contemporary features. That all was based on changes in the scientific interpretation, protection of geological heritage as well as on combining entertainment and education. The resource basis of geo-tourism includes a set or combination of geo - locations, museums, scientific and professional literature and artistic expression. Defining geo-tourism started also relatively recently and still is subject to redefining and improvements. Furthermore, due to the different positions on the emergence and historical development of geo-tourism, as well as the different views on its theoretical framework and its benefits, there are misunderstandings about the importance of its resource basis by various existing and potential stakeholders where it is being developed.

It can be said that geo-tourism represents a niche type of tourism that arose from the tourists’ needs who became more interested in recreational activities and to visit more quality, standardized destinations that use their natural and anthropogenic resources in a sustainable way, where the awareness about the natural and anthropogenic heritage deepens through contemporary forms of interpretation. Such destinations represent the created geo - parks around the world with the support of UNESCO. Geo-tourism is a segment of nature - based tourism or recreational tourism which currently is booming and where the main development basis is geodiversity. A new niche tourism type has been created with its specifications and features that not only is in line with the trends of modern tourism development, but also creates its own trends. Thus, geo - parks are some kind of pioneering forms of destinations that incorporate geo-tourism and are positive examples for successful local and sustainable development

In order to successfully develop geo-tourism primarily there must exist also awareness about the geological heritage. Geological processes that have greater scientific and educational significance can be combined with aesthetic / monumental values which can become geo - locations with excellent tourism potential. Through the implementation and development of geo-tourism certain knowledge about geodiversity, geoconservation is being stimulated as well as their use in sustainable development. It is important to mention that geo-tourism has different values than geodiversity. The main goal is to differentiate and to enrich the tourism offer. Thus, a location that has a rich geological heritage should also have natural and anthropogenic (biotic and abiotic) values and approaches. Of course there should also exist a good interpretation and additional services (accommodation, food services, recreational activities, events, etc.) in order to meet the needs of geotourists.

Geotourists however, should also be defined if there persists the idea to develop geo-tourism in a location and properly to direct the tourism offer. Determining the market segment which is interested to visit the geo – parks is a necessity. Although geo-tourism is about a niche tourism type with specific interest of the consumers, the market segment is a broad category that ranges from students who are interested in the educational importance of geological and geomorphologic values of given areas, to scientists performing research activities to improve geo-conservation, and to groups of tourists who do not have to have a broad knowledge of the issues to visit these locations

From the above mentioned it can be concluded that there is a connection with ecotourism. It is a result of the increased interest for ecotourism activities and cultural tourism by tourists in recent years. Certain common elements are present in both approaches. Important to note is that geo-tourism is not only the sum of tourism activities related to geological, geomorphologic and soil phenomena and processes, but in a broader sense it also includes anthropogenic and biotic values in a sustainable way. Namely, geo-tourism can be defined as a combination of tourism products, services and infrastructure in a given location with the aim to promote geological and geomorphologic heritage in combination with other elements of the natural and cultural heritage (archeology, ecology, historical - cultural sites, etc.). [[1]](#footnote-1)

Sustainable tourism as one of the dominant dimensions contains the protection of space. The Ohrid region and especially the National Park Galicica represent such spatial units. These are spatial units with significant anthropogenic and natural values. The protection of the entire area is a complicated activity. In this sense, providing protection involves securing funds from various sources. In certain areas for this function funds are being taken from the state budget. The self-sustaining development of protected areas, such as the National Park Galicica is bound also to the resources of the meliorate zone. This means that forests, pastures as well as breeding of rare, aromatic and medicinal plants can be a solid source of income. However, this complicates the situation with the sustainable use of natural resources. Tourism, in this sense appears as an adequate source of income funds for the local population, but also in the wider context. Diverting tourism activities with the aim for a larger use of other resources (abiotic), will provide relief in this direction and reducing the risk for their destruction.

# 2. Data and Methods

Within this paper the need for defining the term geo-tourism as a modern phenomenon appeared which itself occurred only recently in the tourism science as well as the scientific public. The existence of various definitions related to geo-tourism imposes the need to detect a sublimated approach where the advantages and disadvantages of groups of definitions are being reviewed. The approaches towards geo-tourism on the European and American continent greatly vary. Both cases refer to a type of sustainable tourism or modern and niche type of tourism, and because the area of the National Park Galicica in the Republic of Macedonia is being considered we strongly think that a more acceptable model is the one accepted in Europe, or by the European network of geo-parks. The criteria of the European geo-parks are specific and require adherence to certain rules.

From the above mentioned it can be concluded that also the need arises for determining of whether the National Park Galicica meets the preconditions for a possible declaring into a geo-park and development of geo-tourism on its territory or the closer environment. Consequently, an inventory and tourist valorization is required as of the geological and geomorphologic features and phenomena that the examined area has, as well as of the other existent resources of natural and anthropogenic origin, which is rare and quite rich on a global level.

In addition to that, the opinions and attitudes of tourists (domestic and foreign) who visited the region are also considered. The studies related to the views of tourists about the natural and anthropogenic values in the Ohrid region, especially in the National Park Galicica, which we believe is particularly important because of the presence of significant geological, geomorphologic and soil resources, were conducted within the Strategy for the development of sustainable tourism or, more precisely within the Management Plan for the National Park Galicica - since 2011. These studies were conducted by the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality – Ohrid, especially related to the collection and processing of data. The questionnaires covered a population of 470 people in the regions of the municipalities of Ohrid and Resen, as well as 830 respondents (residents and tourists) in the National Park Galicica. In the interest of this paper only the questions are covered that we consider to be relevant to the addressed issue of geo-tourism development in this region.

# 3. Defining geo-tourism and geo-parks

The idea for proclaiming geo - parks appeared for the first time in 1999 when the relations between the people and the geology were recognized as well as the potentials for economic development; when whole landscape areas were promoted opposed to small geological sites; and when they were managed in a holistic mnner in order to protect and promote the natural values. The concept was modeled according to the Man and Biosphere Program by UNESCO, which highlighted the links and relations between conservation and development, adding links and relations of science, education and sustainable development. Geo-localities in geo-parks must have scientific significance, as well as to have educational potential and aesthetic value. The interest of tourists for geology should be combined with archaeological, historical, cultural and environmental interests.

The first analogue terms and definitions about geo-tourism can be found in Australia, or more precisely in the study of Jenkins where the phrase "fossicking" was used as a term to replace the so called "gold rush" used in 1850-ies to describe geology focused tourism.[[2]](#footnote-2).

The term "geo-tourism" was used for the first time in the early 1990-ies in Malaysia, as well as the term "tourist geology" as a term for a specialized and applied geology that supports the growth of ecotourism: "...conservation geology which is on the same level as conservation biology….”.[[3]](#footnote-3)

According to Stueve, geo-tourism is being defined in a **broader sense** - including a wider geographical, socio - economic and cultural context that is placed on the importance of geographical tourism. That is, geo-tourism is considered synonymous with "geographic tourism" which is aimed at integrative detecting a given destination, with all its natural and anthropogenic components. In this sense, geology and geomorphology are considered as additional elements of ecological systems and economic development. This most likely derives from the notion that geology is the basis of the physical environment and consequently, also of the ecological systems, as well as through expanding the cultural, spiritual and economic spheres.

In the United States by the National Geographic Magazine an attempt for defining geo-tourism was given. According to the magazine geo-tourism is the "geographical character of a given destination - the overall combination of the natural and anthropogenic values that make the location different from another”.

Another definition of the magazine is the following: "Tourism that provides sustainability, or enhancing the geographical character of a place - its environment, heritage, aesthetic character, culture and the contribution to its population.“[[4]](#footnote-4)

The main disadvantage of these broader sense definitions is the possibility to support "geo - exploitation", because the conservation of these values is not emphasized. Furthermore another disadvantage is that geological and geomorphologic values of a location are not specifically separated as the main motivation for the tourists’ visits, as opposed to other secondary and additional anthropogenic and natural values. Geo-tourism in this sense, is placed within other types of tourism, such as geographical tourism, eco-tourism, educational tourism, etc., and is not emphasized as a separate and contemporary type of tourism.

In terms of the participants, or in a **narrower sense**, geo-tourism can be defined as "recreational geology", which as a set of complex activities is subjected to seasonal effects.[[5]](#footnote-5) Geo-tourism can extend the tourism season in more traditional, mostly coastal tourist regions and cause regenerating strategies in abandoned mines or old industrial regions.

It can be said that Hose provides more detailed definitions undergoing redefinitions by the same author. Therefore, geo-tourism represents the "set of interpretation facilities and for providing services that allow tourists to gain knowledge and understanding of geology and geomorphology in a given location, including the contribution that they have to the development of Earth Sciences”[[6]](#footnote-6).

The same author then gives the following definition: "The promotion and explaining to an uneducated audience for geological features and/or the significance of a separate location in a facility and/or publication."

The redefinition by the same author, after extensive scientific research in this domain, is the following: "The set of facilities and services for interpretation with the aim to promote the values and social benefits of geological and geomorphologic localities and their materials, as well as to ensure their conservation for students, tourists and other occasional visitors”.[[7]](#footnote-7)

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On the other side also other authors in recent years provide definitions in a narrower sense. Dowling and Newsome consider geo-tourism to be a "sustainable type of tourism with a primary focus on experiencing the geological features of the Earth in a way that enhances the environmental and social understanding, respect and conservation, and which exhibits local benefits. It is about creating geo-tourism product that protects geo-heritage, helps in building communities, promoting geological heritage and includes a large number of stakeholders.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The given definitions in a narrower sense manifest more advantages in comparison to the definitions in a broader sense. The "geo" element in them represents the geology and geomorphology. It can be said that geo-tourism combines the geological elements (forms and processes) with the components of tourism such as attractions, accommodation, package tours, activities, interpretation, promotion, planning and management.

The authors who review the definitions about geo-tourism in a narrower sense analyze this issue as a system composed of three subsystems:

* + ***Forms*** (landscapes, earth forms, sediments, rocks, soils, fossils, etc.);
	+ ***Processes*** (tectonic activity, volcanic processes, abrasive processes, weathering processes, aeolian processes accumulation processes, etc.);
	+ ***Tourism*** (attractions, accommodation, tours, activities, interpretation, promotion, planning and management).

In interest of this paper a summarized definition about geo-tourism can be given:

***Geo-tourism is a contemporary niche type of tourism with special interest that develops in a region because of the value of geodiversity (the set of geological, geomorphologic and soil phenomena, processes, relations, characteristics, interpretations and systems), combined with the other natural (biotic) and anthropogenic values; it encourages geo-conservation through sustainable development, interpretation and promotion of the values in that environment, that generate benefits for the local communities***[[9]](#footnote-9).

There are five key principles that are fundamental to geo-tourism[[10]](#footnote-10):

* + **Geology based**
	+ **Sustainable**
	+ **Geology informative**

- **Creates local benefits**

- **Satisfaction of tourists**

Geo-tourism means creating of such a state, or place where the local population and tourists can freely and without interference enjoy the local geological values.[[11]](#footnote-11) It creates such an experience that connects the local landscape, community and tourists who exhibit different interests. Local businesses and communities need to cooperate in order to promote and create authentic and unique travel experiences. Much attention is put into informing tourists and local communities about the Earth values through geological interpretation and education. Geo-tourism businesses usually are managed by local communities and can include interpretation, package tours, providing services for accommodation and food and so on. On the other side it will generate new businesses and jobs for local people which will result in different economic benefits.

Geo-tourism can also generate benefits that will be used for the conservation of resources, in addition to social and cultural benefits. These benefits can be financial, where a part of the realized package tours in the region can be used to fund geo-conservation projects. The practical help in the field to the tourists involved in the collection of geological data and/or their analysis can be considered as an alternative.

The ***goals*** of sustainable geo-tourism can also be addressed:

- To create a greater awareness and understanding for the contributions that geo-tourism can have on the environment, local communities and economy;

- To raise the standard of living of the local population;

- To create benefits (income);

- To create a high quality geological experience for the tourists and

- To maintain and improve the quality of geo-heritage which are based on the previously stated goals.

The goals of geo - parks are achieved through the activities of conservation, education and geo-tourism. That is realized through protected and interpreted geo - localities, museums, information centers, trails, guided tours, school trips, popularized literature, maps, educational materials, information panels or seminars. In geo-parks economic activity and sustainable development is stimulated through developing geo-tourism. A high-quality brand for significant natural heritage is being promoted as well as local businesses involved in geo-tourism and creation of geo - products is being supported.

The Division of Earth Sciences of UNESCO began to develop the concept of creating a program for geo - parks far back in 1997 in order to support national and international activities for the conservation of Earth heritage. It was discovered that preservation and international recognition of geological heritage was not covered by any of the existing programs of UNESCO. Therefore, in 1999 a feasibility study was sent to the Executive Council in order to establish a program for geo - parks. Furthermore, it was reviewed whether some of the existing programs were associated with this initiative, such as the International Programme for Geological Correlation and the Man and Biosphere Program. The final decision by the Executive Council of UNESCO was not to develop a separate program within that framework. It can freely be said that from a legal point of view there is no such term as an "UNESCO Geo - Park". The Division of Earth Sciences continued to support the "Education of Earth Sciences"-strategy, through the promotion of Earth heritage, but only in cases where there was an explicit request by the Member States. The collaboration resulted in the creation of a European network of geo - parks in the year 2000 the and the Global Network of National Geo - parks in the year 2004.

According to the charter of the European geo - parks they define the geo-parks as:

A European geo - park is a territory that includes special geological heritage and a strategy for sustainable development, supported by a European program to enhance development. Locations within the European geo - park must be connected in a network and to have benefits from the protection and management activities.

The European geo - park must protect the values of conservation of geological heritage and therefore there must not be any kind of destruction or sale of geological objects in it.

For a European territory to become a member of the global network of geo – parks of UNESCO, it must submit a complete application form to the European network of geo - parks, which acts as an organization for integration in the network responsible for the European continent[[12]](#footnote-12).

The assumptions for a territory to be declared as an European geo - Park are the following:

* It must be a strictly defined area;
* Most of the sites are located within the territory of the European geo - park must form be a part of the geological heritage, but their importance can be archaeological, ecological or cultural;
* To develop geo-tourism on its territory**;**
* An important goal is to help the local population to reevaluate the values of heritage and actively to participate in cultural revitalization as a whole;
* They should experiment with the methods of protecting the geological heritage and to improve them;
* The park must communicate with local businesses engaged in geo-tourism activities.

# 4. Positive and negative impacts of geo-tourism

Each type of tourism causes impacts can be positive and / or negative. The type of disturbance of any sort of recreational activity that are caused by tourists may depend on many factors, and depending on the nature they can also be permanent. Direct negative human impact caused by attending or recreation in the geological environment often results in drawing graffiti, erosion of loose rocks, disturbance of sensitive values (caves) and destruction as a result of excavation and collection of fossils.

The advantages that arise from the development of geo-tourism on a territory can be multidimensional, because of the fact that it generates benefits for all stakeholders involved in these processes. Several important advantages can be distinguished: generating economic, socio - cultural and environmental benefits through the development of sustainable tourism; generating new businesses and jobs; raising awareness about geodiversity and geo-conservation as for the tourists as well as for the local population; attracting more tourists interested in this type of niche tourism; extension of the tourist season; attracting scientists and researchers who will contribute in enhancing the level of protection of values, geo-conservation and preservation of the environment in general; developing alternative types of tourism that can be combined with geo-tourism in the tourism offer; cooperation between different stakeholders; creating a recognizable brand by creating a geo - park and so on.

The most important role of planning and management is to maximize the positive and to reduce the negative effects. However, intensive research activities should be done about the effects and impacts of visitors and tourists have on geological environments. Until recently it was considered that tourism does not manifest any important influences on these values. The reason for this was the fact that there was no broader knowledge about the impact of tourism on geology[[13]](#footnote-13). Later it was discovered that the rock formations and caves were influenced by both amateur collectors of minerals, rocks and fossils, as well as by professional collectors of souvenirs. On top of this vandalism in caves can be added in the form that tourists sign their names or initials. It should also be highlighted that the damages caused by the climbers and mountaineers who destroy some rocks in their process of climbing.

With the increase of the number of tourists that visit these protected areas the potential also arises for negative impacts and the nature and level of impact can vary and be complex depending on the situation. The importance of the influences can depend on the type and the source of influence, the sensitivity of the environment, additional cumulative pressures, as well as the effectiveness of management in these environments. In some areas the influences that can be considered as negative can have positive influences in other areas.

# 5. Research findings on the potential opportunities in the National Park Galicica for declaring it into a geo-park

The level of construction of accommodation facilities as well as the other elements of the material basis for the development of tourism, this area has numerous advantages over the other regions. This region has also the dominant place related to the level of attendance as well as spent tourist overnights.

Galicica Mountain for its values was declared intо a National Park in 1958, only on the Macedonian side. In the interest of this paper, most attention can be put on the National Park Galicica because of the presence of geological and geomorphologic values which exhibit important features for a possible declaration of the Ohrid region, or the wider region of the National park into a geo - park and developing geo-tourism. Galicica National Park is located in the southwestern part of the Republic of Macedonia, on the territory of the mountain Galicica, along the shoreline of the Ohrid Lake, including parts of its branches of Istok and Precna Mountain, as well as the island of Golem Grad in the Prespa Lake.

Besides its exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic value, Galicica is a unique environment with well-preserved natural flora in several ecosystems. The Galicica National Park contains more than 1,600 species of plants, which include numerous relict forms and at least 12 endemic forms, as well as about 100 species of plants that are collected for medicinal use.

The flora of the National Park Galicica includes more than 800 species, including many endemic and relict forms whose most distant borders stretch exactly on the mountain of Galicica. The presence of tvelwe discovered local endemic forms is very important. These forms are present only on the slopes of Galicica mountain., and a clear proof of the unique floral structure on the mountain. It should be emphasized that there is ongoing intensive research on the flora in the park. There are indications of even greater number of endemic forms.

The fauna of Galicica is also very rich and diverse. There are no exact data on the number of invertebrate species. Vertebrates are present with 170 species including 10 species of amphibians, 18 reptiles, 124 birds and 18 mammals. The extreme importance of the National Park is considered in terms of the abundance of geomorphologic phenomena in this area that could be used as a resource basis in developing geo-tourism.

Geological surveys performed on the mountain of Galicica are undertaken by the Geological Institute – Skopje. According to them the rock massifs of adifferent age and mineralogical composition can be grouped into the following geological formations[[14]](#footnote-14):

* Complex of Paleozoic metamorphic and magma rocks;
* Complex of Mesozoic sediment rocks and
* Complex of Tertirary and Quarternary sediments.

Dominant morphogenetic processes participated in the past or are still involved today in the creation of diverse landscape forms: karst, glacial and periglacial forms. These processes often intertwine (supplement) between themselves, and also their intensity was changing or even completely disappeared depending on climate changes. On the Mountain Galicica the dominant forms are the karst forms.

The Ohrid Lake, the largest part of the protected area, is one of the oldest lakes in the world, which, according to its very clean waters represents a natural museum of relic freshwater organisms from the tertiary period, whose close relatives can be found as fossils. Its geographical isolation and the unchanging nature of its environment helped to preserve many relict freshwater organisms from the tertiary period in the Pelagonian area, whose close relatives can be found in fossil forms, and helped evolutionary to form new species out of them. In this sense, the Ohrid Lake is similar to the Baikal Lake, but in a much lesser extent. Many endemic invertebrates and include freshwater shellfish, crabs and sponges, in which included is the round sponge *Ohridspongia rotunda*. Identified are more than 146 endemic species.

The city of Ohrid is a treasure trove for its cultural values and their diversity. Protected by UNESCO as a cultural heritage site since 1980 it is an interesting place for domestic and foreign visitors. Given the fact that part of the UNESCO protected area or borders go not only through the city, but also takes almost half of the territory of the National Park Galicica. Therefore a unique opportunity exist for combining these features with the geo-tourism values in this area.

# 5.1. Categorization and valorization of geological and geomorphologic forms in the National Park Galicica

The categorization of landscape forms within the National Park Galicica an already developed methodology is being used, that is applied to the whole territory of the Republic of Macedonia, as for the overall geomorphologic elements as well as for the special underground karst forms.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The three categories in which these belong are the following:

* Landscape forms which for some of their features are unique or especially rare in the Euro – Mediterranean region, or even on a Global scale;
* Rare or unique forms on the Balkan Peninsula and
* Phenomena, localities or single forms that have local significance, on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia.

Such forms are the following: the mountain of Galicica itself – in the III category, the part of the mountain called Stara Galicica – also in the III category, and the island of Golem Grad – in the II category. If a detailed analysis is being performed only on the territory of the National Park Galicica, then in the area of Stara Galicica (II category), as single elements the following can be distinguished: **two cirques (III category),** **morain deposits** at the mountain pass Polce and Zli Dol **(III category)**, the **horseshoe-shaped stone basins** inside the cirues **(II category)** and the **grass terraces** on the Prespa Lake side on Stara Galicica **(I category)**.

# 5.2. Churches and monasteries in the National Park Galicica

In the National Park exist numerous early-christian and medieval churches with different significance. Not only is the Ohrid region known as the Balkan Jerusalem because of its significant churches, but also in the National Park there exist opportunities for combining different experiences to the tourists and visitors in this area. Some of the most important in the National Park are:

* Early – Christian basilica Studenchista (V-VI century AD)
* Monastery St. Naum (X Century AD)
* Church Mother of God Zahumska (XIV century AD)
* Church – Dormition of Mother of God, Velestovo (XV century AD)
* Early-christian basilicas and medieval churches on the island of Golem Grad – Prespa Lake

As especially important cultural values that are represented in the area of the Ohrid region and the closer environment are the numerous cave churches. The whole region around the lake abounds with these creative spiritual works of the population living in this area. It derives from the fact that Ohrid almost from the very beginning of its existence was a cultural and religious center where many such monastic dwellings were created.

The first monks ever appeared in this region as early as in the III century AD. Monasticism shows specific rise in the XIII and XIV century, influenced by the emerging Christian mysticism and hesychastic movement. On the shores of the lake several important cave churches can be found.[[16]](#footnote-16) They are significant because they are relatively close to the region of the national park Galicica itself.

These churches are perfectly integrated into the surrounding landscape and represent the perfect example of combining human creativity with the natural beauties in a relatively narrow area. From the geo-tourism point of view they represent irreplaceable potentials because such attractive - motivic features can not be found so far in any existent European geo-park. In this sense, the Ohrid region, or the National Park Galicica exhibits competitive and comparative advantages. Locations of cave churches show a unique opportunity to combine activities of a different character, such as the simultaneous presentation of geology, cultural - historical heritage and their spiritual value. The curiosity significance of the cave churches prevails, where through adequate tourism valorization, equipment and protection they may represent Unique Selling Points in the framework of sustainable geo-tourism development.

# 6. Discussion

From the previously mentioned it can be concluded that within the National Park Galicica or in the Ohrid region the prerequisites are met which are prescribed in the application form for declaring it into a geo - park in terms of availability of certain geological and geomorphologic forms for their importance, significance and rarity, not only in regional terms, but also beyond, on a global level. Combined with the other natural and cultural values which are abundant in this region there exists the unique possibility of developing specific tourism products as part of geo-tourism that can not be found anywhere in the world.

The project "Support the Park", which implementation started in 2011/2012, supports the park in the transformation of an ordinary forest enterprise into an institution of protection, with a management plan for the protected areas, which is in accordance with international standards, modern management with visitors and the programs for environmental education of the local population and tourists. This research was also a part of the Management Plan for the National Park Galicica. One of the main aspects and goals of the transformation of the park is the development of activities in the field of sustainable tourism, which in turn will contribute to increase revenues from additional sources other than just the income from forestry. The basic idea was to improve services for visitors to the park, which would result in revenue that can not cover only direct costs for services, but also can contribute to the financing of activities in the domain of protection. Most of the offered services, as well as cooperation between the park and local residents will increase the acceptance of the development of tourism in the park and direct benefits for the residents.

In continuation of this paper just several questions will be covered that we consider show in a best manner the attitudes and opinions of the tourists that visited this area for the development opportunities of geo-tourism.

About the question: If the tourists have ever before heard about the National Park Galicica the respondents provided different answers. 735 respondents answered positively on this question and only 86 gave a negative answer. This shows that the tourists are relatively well informed, but additional promotional activities are needed. In the sense of geo-tourism development for example, it is not enough to ask the tourists only about the existence of the National Park Galicica, but also if they know anything about the geo-tourism values that exist in the Park. This should also include the potential tourists not only the existent ones.

About the following question which included the motivation of the tourists for visiting this National Park a large diversity of answers were provided. The highest number of answers was related to holiday and recreation activities (269 respondents), the follow answers about the natural beauties (199), visiting the monastery St. Naum (139), beach and lake activities (94 respondents) and visiting cultural-historical values (64 respondents). The least answers were provided regarding entertainment, environment, sports, picnics, work, visiting the Prespa Lake, hiking, visiting friends, visiting the springs, cycling, yoga, hunting and collecting tea, which speaks for these other types of recreational activities that are possible to be done in this area. The motivation for visiting the natural beauties dominates which is very important of the geo-tourism type of view.

One of the questions was addressed on the importance of several categories which influenced their decision to visit this region. Regarding this question several different answers were given. As most important (graded with the note 1) were answers given about enjoying landscapes (568 respondents), visiting the monastery of St. Naum (529), sun and beach activities (499), picnics (403), cultural heritage (382), sporting activities (302), bird watching and other wildlife (245), and at the end collecting medicinal herbs (197 respondents). It is important that in each category the most answers were given as the most important. There are smaller variations in the other levels of significance, but mostly dominant is the highest level of significance. It can be concluded freely that most activities can be incorporated in future geo-tourism activities.

About the question: Hoe many times have you visited the National Park the answers were not so positive. The largest number of participants in the survey answered to be there for the first time (46%), the follow the answers such as more that two times (20%), and the second time (19%). The rest did not provide any answer (15%). This provides the conclusion that more promotion activities are needed, as well as to develop a recognizable tourism brand, with the aim to attract tourists more times to visit this region. This could be possible with proclaiming the park into a geo-park.

About the question whether the existence of the National Park Galicica with a poorly developed tourism brand had any influence on their visiting different answers were provided as well. Most respondents answered with Yes (552 respondents), then follow the respondents who answered No (139), and Maybe (112 respondents). The remaining ones did not provide an answer on this question. From these answers it can be concluded that there exists a need for developing a known tourism brand – such as the already mentioned geo-park brand.

Another relevant question we believe should also be the question about what mostly attracts them to visit this region. The five best answers were as following: Lake (252 respondents), Churches (98), Beaches (68), Climate characteristics (50), Entertainment and night life (41). From these answers it can be seen that the combination of activities is possible. Important is to mention that the first two questions are related to natural and cultural values. The Ohrid Lake as one the oldest in the world is very interesting to explore, but also the above mentioned churches (and cave churches respectively), through which unique combinations are possible to meet the tourists’ needs.

# 7. Conclusions

The research aims regarding the development of sustainable tourism is in accordance with the requirements and prerequisites for developing geo-tourism in the region of the National Park Galicica. In particular it can be seen in the sustainable usage of local resources without their exploitation and devastation since 2012 with the Management Plan and which is still continuing. Furthermore, important aspects represent the direct benefits of such activities for the local population, as well as education opportunities for sustainable tourism development. In the interest of this paper it can be considered that there exist excellent opportunities for developing a contemporary and modern type of tourism, such as geo-tourism. Thus, the relatively short tourist season will be prolonged significantly.

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