

CHAPTER 4

ECO - SPORTS TOURISM: PROS AND CONS

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Eco-sport tourism promotes increased environmental awareness and physical activity of people in nature and is becoming increasingly popular due to its focus on the environment, natural environment, sustainability and with a certain impact on the local population and their culture. This type of tourism has become one of the growing sectors of the tourism industry. On the one hand, sports that are carried out in a natural environment, outdoors, are beneficial for health, especially if they are performed in a healthy environment, such as: plogging, free climbing, hiking, cycling, kayaking, sailing, diving, etc. On the other hand, practicing the aforementioned physical activities in nature leads to the consumption of natural resources and nature is exhausted. The positive sides of eco-sport tourism are certainly: promotion as a means of preserving natural resources, focus on sustainability and nature conservation, use of renewable energy and organization of eco-sport events without waste, development of the local community and stimulation of economic growth at the local level, symbiosis of physical activity and nature, promotion of ecological educational models through sports and activities in nature based on ecological concepts, etc. All of the above aims to educate tourists and the local population about a series of measures and activities that can be planned for a longer period of time. It is most important to point out that eco-sport tourism is based on the idea of preserving ecological and all

kinds of natural resources. The negative side of eco-sport tourism refers to the increase in the number of tourists who nevertheless cause disturbances in the functioning of the flora and fauna in a certain area and have a certain impact on the environment, which violates the first priority, which is: the protection of nature. In some way, the media influence the advertising of certain eco-sport destinations, which attracts a large number of people and encourages the mass, which automatically violates the primary idea of eco-sport tourism. With the increase in the number of such tourists, there is increased pressure to develop such eco-areas and become more inclusive and resort-like (construction of more accommodation and supporting facilities, development of business and supporting facilities, etc.), which overall leads to the potential destruction of habitats, i.e. endangering local life environment, wild animal life, plant life, etc. The subject of this research refers to eco-sport tourism and its connection and potential with all relevant factors in this area, taking into account both positive and negative aspects and perspectives of that action and impact. The aim of this work is to present certain benefits, but also the consequences of the concept of eco-sport tourism on nature and its environment, based on previous research and facts, and to point out that eco-sport tourism is primarily a responsibility based on the protection of nature and all its resources. This type of tourism must not turn into mass tourism in its concept, but must take care of the integrity of the natural sites that are the goal of the trip.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Although the material resources that are earned from eco-sport tourism are mostly invested in the construction and improvement of local eco-systems, the question of the positive influence of people (actors) who practice this type of tourism is raised. Many studies talk about the negative impact of eco-sport tourism on flora and fauna, which leads to various changes in nature itself and biodiversity. Protected areas are becoming "targets" and desirable destinations for people who want physical activity, nature and adventure. An increasing number of states, cities, and local communities create eco-concepts that include certain measures that are implemented to protect flora and fauna on the one hand, and on the other hand enable the practice of eco-sports under certain conditions and with restrictions, such as for example, this was done in Franconian Switzerland (Bavaria, Germany, where some nature reserves are divided into three zones). In one of the nature reserves, the first zone is closed for tourists, in the second zone there are periods when eco-tourists are allowed or forbidden to climb the rocks depending on the period when the birds hatch eggs and take care of their young and the period when the young birds leave the parental nest. The third zone is completely open to tourists. Depending on the sports practiced in nature

within eco-sport tourism and destinations, there are different eco-concepts that aim to satisfy both tourists and nature and create a kind of balance, which is very difficult nowadays. CONCLUSION. Man embeds himself more and more in nature and thus damages it, and then himself. Eco-sport tourism is a useful resource for identifying destinations and trips that are based on sustainability and where the interests of preserving flora and fauna, local culture and population are a priority only if that idea (privilege) is based on being above profit. The issue of the relationship between health, eco-sports, tourism and the environment is gaining increasing social, economic, and even political importance and is increasingly the subject of debates based on various projects, programs of international organizations and even the United Nations itself, which pay great attention and responsibility to these relations and topics.

Keywords: *eco tourism, sports tourism, sport, environmental protection, nature, physical activity.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Hunziker and Kraft (Swiss scientists who presented their definition of tourism in 1954), tourism is *"a set of relationships and phenomena that result from the travel and stay of visitors to a place, if that stay does not establish a permanent residence and if their economic activity"* (Stanković, 1994).

The emergence of sports and recreation as the main motive of tourist trips led to the emergence of the term sports tourism, which developed rapidly and included: spectator (fan) tourism, competitive tourism, recreational tourism, adventure and adrenaline tourism, nature tourism, etc. (Ivanovski, Popović, 2018; Drljević et al, 2018). According to the United Nations (UN), sports tourism is one of the basic axes of tourism, which generates about 10% of the world's consumption in tourism. It has an estimated growth rate of 17.5% between years 2023-2030. Sports tourism promotes social, economic and environmental action, accelerates development and has a long-term and positive impact on heritage (Sports Tourism News, 2024). Vid and Bull (2004) presented a categorization of sports tourism, which includes five basic groups: active sports, sports activities during vacations, passive sports, individual sports activities and multiple sports activities. According to their model, it is possible to talk about the following types of sports tourism: tourism with sports content, tourism with sports activity, sports training, sports events and luxury sports tourism (Drljević, 2017).

Eco-sports tourism represents a new trend in tourism that includes the way of travel, diverse opportunities for using free time, and above all, the realization of sports activities in nature. Also, it represents a trip to relatively untouched areas of nature with the aim of enjoying it, responsibility and its appreciation, preservation and promotion of environmental protection (Drljević et al, 2019). To a certain extent, it affects nature (either positively or negatively), but in any case it provides opportunities for active and useful involvement in the socio-economic events of the local population in the tourism industry. As a new sector of tourism, it represents an area for which there is increasing interest, especially in less developed countries, where health, environmental protection and sustainable development are promoted above all. Eco-sport tourism was born from the connection between ecological tourism and sports tourism (Jovanović et al, 2019).

The term ecotourism was among the first to be formulated by Hector Ceballos-Lascuren (1987), a Mexican architect, ecologist and international consultant for ecotourism, who defined ecotourism as *"a form of tourism that consists in traveling to relatively untouched or unpolluted natural areas with the specific aim of studying, admiring and enjoying the landscape and its wild plants, animals, as well as all existing cultural manifestations found in certain areas"* (Ecotourism, 2024.) Ecotourism is considered a market that is constantly growing within tourism as an economic branch. According to data from the World Tourism Organization, with an annual growth of 5% at the global level, which represents 6% of the world's gross product as well as 11.4% of consumption, the eco-tourism area deserves special attention (Green Planet, 2024). Ecological or eco-tourism is a specific form of tourism that refers to responsible travel to areas of preserved nature and a high level of nature protection that affect the well-being of the local community and include the understanding and education of tourists (Zeba, 2021). The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as: *"responsible travel to natural areas that preserves the environment, maintains the well-being of local people and includes education and training"*, while in Australia ecotourism is defined as *"environmentally sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experience natural areas that encourage ecological and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation"* (Ecotourism: definition, meaning and examples, 2024). First of all, it represents a specific form of travel to relatively unpolluted areas of nature in order to admire and enjoy the landscapes, plants and wild animals, but also in all the accompanying cultural objects of a certain location.

Eco-sport tourism promotes increased environmental awareness and physical activity of people in nature and is becoming increasingly popular due to its focus on the environment, natural environment, sustainability and with a certain impact on the local population and their culture. This type of tourism has become one of the growing sectors of the tourism industry. On the one hand, sports that are carried out in a natural environment, outdoors, are beneficial for health, especially if they are performed in a healthy environment, such as: plogging, free climbing, hiking, cycling, kayaking, sailing, diving, etc. On the other hand, practicing the aforementioned physical activities in nature leads to the consumption of natural resources and nature is exhausted. An increasing number of tourists plan their trips with the aim of satisfying their needs in terms of physical abilities, then they try to minimize their carbon footprint, because they have an ecological awareness above all and to get to know, discover and take care of the protection of local cultures in a certain area through their stay in nature destination. The basic determination of ecological-sports tourists is the motivation to get to know new natural resources in a healthy and green environment with ecological sports-tourism facilities in their free time through free and selected physical activities in nature.

In the last few decades, it has been observed that certain sectors of tourism have a great impact on the economic and social development of many countries. Special growth is recorded in ecological tourism with the application of sports and recreational activities in areas that are attractive for tourists, including specially protected natural areas. As a result of the increase in the number of tourists who prefer active recreation in the natural environment, there is an expansion of the territories covered by tourist activities, which leads to the burden and degradation of natural complexes. That is why it is very important to determine (estimate) the optimal permissible load of a certain locality in nature, how such a natural environment exposed to the maximum load (number of eco-sport tourists) without damage to natural and local resources (cultural, historical, etc.). Strict compliance with clearly defined rules regarding the functioning of the ecological system in nature is a basic task that should be dealt with in addition to planning, organizing, managing and monitoring activities in the field of eco-sport tourism.

Eco-sport tourism is influenced by many factors, and the following factors have a great influence on the planning, organization and realization of trips by eco-sport tourists: the diverse offer of tourist organizations (eco-sport content, facilities, catering, etc.), the involvement of local environmental and sports organizations and local governments. An increasing number of people are getting involved in eco-sport tourism to

escape from urban and city environments and surround themselves with nature. Thus, eco-sport tourism is based on responsible travel, on creating connections between tourists, health, natural and cultural resources, as well as on educating all participants about the importance of preserving natural resources. The success of eco-sport tourism is reflected in the creation and strengthening of tourists' awareness of the impact they have on the places they visit. Education is also an important segment, as it includes teaching eco-sport tourists about ways and creation of principles for nature conservation (recycling materials, reducing water consumption, energy consumption, etc.). The main motive of eco-sport tourism is that through physical activity (various forms), tourists learn more about the environment and the eco-system. The characteristics of eco-sports tourism are: minimal impact on the environment, physical activity, maximum satisfaction and benefits for the local community, which overall creates green (ecological)-sports tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this paper, the method of theoretical analysis was applied, and with a critical approach, scientific papers and professional literature, then reference and reliable documents, focused on the subject of research were analyzed. The subject of this research is related to eco-sport tourism and its connection and potential with all relevant factors in this area, taking into account both positive and negative aspects and perspectives of that action and impact. The aim of this work is to present certain benefits, but also the consequences of the concept of eco-sport tourism on nature and its environment, based on previous research and facts, and to point out that eco-sport tourism is primarily a responsibility based on the protection of nature and all its resources. This type of tourism must not turn into mass tourism in its concept, but must take care of the integrity of the natural sites that are the goal of the trip.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Today, tourism represents a phenomenon that in many countries leads to a strong impact and development on the economic and social level, primarily at the local and global level. Tourism, in addition to basic economic functions, also depends on the satisfaction of other social functions: sports, recreational, social, political, educational, cultural, etc. (Relac, Bartoluci, 1987). Tourism includes various factors and factors that interpenetrate each other: natural and anthropogenic values; roads and

means of transport; tourist and hospitality facilities; initiative and receptive organizations, etc. (Stanković, 1994).

A large number of people develop their skills, habits and abilities (through various sports activities) through the practice of some form of tourism. However, the increasing number of tourists in a certain location (massiveness) has a strong impact on the environment, and the protection of natural resources is a condition without which sustainable development of tourism cannot be imagined. The goal of sustainable tourism is to increase awareness of protected areas as part of the common heritage, that is, to strengthen the need to preserve those areas for future generations. Eco-sports tourism was created as a symbiosis of ecological and sports tourism, with the focus primarily on preserving the environment by satisfying the need for sports activities that do not damage the eco system.

Eco-sport tourism has become one of the more popular types of tourism. It arose as a need of tourists to travel to certain areas with recognizable and preserved flora and fauna, practicing certain sports activities in nature with the concept of minimal impact on the environment. Looking at the concept of ecotourism, it can be said that eco-sport tourism, like ecotourism, rests on two concepts: economic impact and economic value (Štrbac, Hamović, 2011). The concept of reducing the negative impacts of eco-sport tourists on the natural environment is an idea that cannot be avoided. We should also not forget the fact that tourism is one of the main drivers of the entire economy. However, the mass of eco-sport tourism in areas that are less and less protected from the arrival of eco-sport tourists, leads to a phenomenon that, according to the Association for Sustainable Tourism of the EU, is called mass tourism syndrome - *"loving something until it disappears"*, when tourists destroy the very thing came to see (Network of protected areas of the Dinarides, 2024). Good planning, organization and implementation of activities within eco-sport tourism can lead to certain benefits for the local community, the tourist community and the visitors themselves. Observing the concept of eco-sport tourism and the concept of sustainable tourism, it can be said that the main goal is to meet the needs of the tourists themselves on the ecological and sports level (by practicing activities), as well as the needs of the tourist workers themselves, and in this way the potentials are improved in the future. It also implies such a way of managing all resources that the economic, social and aesthetic needs of tourists are met, and at the same time the cultural identity, important ecological processes, biological diversity, etc. are maintained. In this way, by respecting the aforementioned principles, these ways of behaving in this type of tourism become a moral obligation of all participants, one after the other, towards the local community and towards

future generations. Eco-sport tourism activities include: hiking, bird and wildlife watching, water sports, mountain biking, caving, climbing, camping in protected areas, exchange of cultural experiences with local communities, tree planting experiences, education, flora, fauna and natural resource research, as well as all other sports activities that are in accordance with the eco-system with respect for nature and its environment.

The global ecotourism industry worldwide is valued at US\$172.4 billion in 2022, and the sector is projected to grow to US\$374.2 billion by 2028 (at a CAGR of 13.9%). which can be seen in fig. 1 (Global ecotourism market size, 2022).

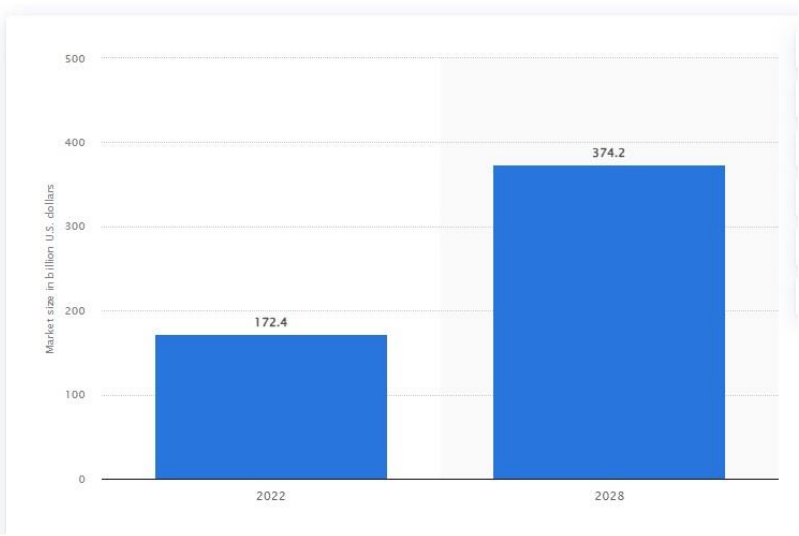


Figure 1 - Graphic representation of the market size of the ecotourism sector worldwide in 2022 (with forecast for 2028).

Source: Statista.com

The ecotourism market alone is estimated at \$216.49 billion worldwide in 2023 and is projected to grow from \$260.76 billion in 2024 to \$759.93 billion by 2032 (Fortune Business Insights, 2024).

On the other hand, the size of the global sports tourism market is estimated at 587.87 billion dollars in 2022, while in 2023 the market was 690.75 billion dollars, and according to some researches, it is estimated that

by 2031 an increase is expected to 2,509.70 billion dollars (Sports tourism market size, 2024). Some projections of other researchers in this field are that in the period 2024-2032. year, the market will be around 1.33 trillion US dollars. (Global market insights. Sports tourism market size, 2024). Growing cooperation between all sectors of tourism (including eco-sports tourism) and the sports industry encourages innovation, partnership initiatives and promotes sustainable growth of tourism in general.

Table 1 - Global Ecotourism Industry 2022-2028. (Global ecotourism market size, 2022)

Ecotourism industry	
2022.	172,4 billion \$
2023.	216,49 billion \$
2024.	260,76 billion \$
2028.	374,2 billion \$
until 2032	759,93 billion \$

Table 2 - Sports tourism market 2023-2032. (Global market insights, 2024).

Sports tourism industry	
2023.	564,7 billion \$
2024-2032.	1,33 trillion \$

Eco-sport tourists are increasingly becoming the subject of research both from the positive side and from the negative connotations associated with this type of tourism. According to research on the behavior of eco-sport tourists in Guangzhou, China within the Liuki National Forest Park, it was concluded that four characteristics prevail among eco-sport tourists (Li, 2017):

- 1) motivation focused on physical activity in nature and free time;
- 2) low level of consumption of eco-sport tourists;
- 3) satisfaction with safety during physical activities in environmental conditions;
- 4) availability of eco-sport tourist facilities and their services, availability of getting to know local culture.

Also four main factors that are recognized and connected according to this author when it comes to eco-sport tourists are: conditions of natural resources, ecological-sports-tourism infrastructure, conditions for people's activities and safety of eco-sport tourism. The satisfaction of eco-sport tourists is a very important factor influencing the consumer behavior of eco-sport tourists. The satisfaction of tourists is reflected in the landscapes of nature, and the appropriate infrastructure, environment, tourist and sports services in preserved nature. Fig. 2 shows the basic factors in eco-sport tourism and their relationships. The basic relationship is man-spatial carrier-nature (He, Wu, 2022).

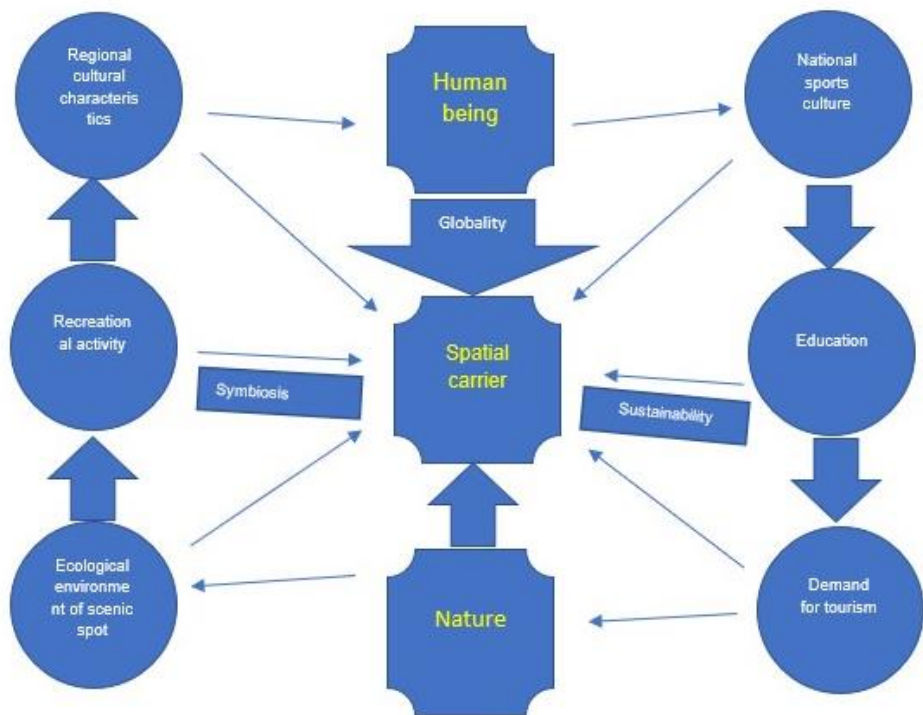


Figure 2 - Basic factors in eco-sport tourism (He, Wu, 2022).

Eco-sports tourism refers to sustainability and can be connected to certain factors and factors that depend on the field of sports tourism, which includes certain dimensions and criteria, which can be seen in the following table:

Table 3 - Dimensions and sustainability criteria of sports tourism (Yang et al., 2020).

DIMENSIONS	SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA
Economic sustainability	Local employment opportunities Economic feasibility Promotion of local sports culture Different forms of sports activities
Ecological sustainability	The integrity of the sports facility Biodiversity Waste recycling Low environmental pollution
Socio-cultural sustainability	Social equality Tourist services Protection of basic rights of residents Social Protection Improvement of local potentials Responding to rescue and emergency situations
Institutional sustainability	Protection of regional regulations Promotion and marketing Land planning for tourism (sports, ecological, etc.) Participation of local authorities

HARMONY OF SPORTS AND NATURE

The positive sides of eco-sport tourism are certainly: promotion as a means of preserving natural resources, focus on sustainability and nature conservation, use of renewable energy and organization of eco-sport events without waste, development of the local community and stimulation of economic growth at the local level, symbiosis of physical activity and nature, promotion of ecological educational models through sports and activities in nature based on ecological concepts, etc. All of the above aims to educate tourists and the local population about a series of measures and activities that can be planned for a longer period of time. It is most important to point out that eco-sport tourism is based on the idea of preserving ecological and all kinds of natural resources. This type of tourism plays a very important role in the economic development of certain destinations, with a huge influence of local, regional or national character.

Eco-sport tourism in many countries that are rich in natural beauty is developing in the direction of its preservation, i.e. it is not aimed only at enjoying the beauty of local nature. Certain sports activities promote a minimal impact on nature and educate participants about the preservation and appreciation of the environment. In Belarus, in certain locations (Bialoveshka Pucha), cyclists have a route that is modeled to minimize the impact on the ecosystem, while at the same time providing tourists with

unique wildlife viewing experiences (BelTur-Sport, 2024). Unlike mass tourism, which often leads to pollution of tourist destinations, overcrowding, eco-sport tourism focuses on sustainability and conservation. Eco-sports tourism, in addition to the ecological component and the implementation of sports activities (active sports recreation), also contributes to the development of local communities, the creation of new jobs and the stimulation of economic growth, and everything is directed towards the preservation of nature. Eco-sport tourism in its scope includes programs (mountaineering, for example) that teach about the flora and fauna, historical aspects of a certain area as well as the importance of preserving biodiversity, which leads to the conclusion that a very important component of eco-sport tourism is the education of the participants (tourists). In many countries around the world, various sports events are often held in nature that meet strict environmental standards on the one hand, and on the other hand, many sports events (such as marathon races in Belarus, etc.) through nature not only popularize a healthy lifestyle, but through the collection of funds, work is being done to protect, preserve and restore those same landscapes (BelTur-Sport, 2024). Various eco-sport events are organized without waste, using renewable energy, which is an indicator that other areas of the economy can and must emulate this type of tourism.

The trend of preserving the environment while practicing sports activities also "created" running with waste collection, or "plogging", and there are also variations of this type of activity, such as walking, hiking, cycling, rowing, etc. Some of the main directions and goals of this type of activity are: strengthening health through physical exercise, fighting against plastic pollution, protecting wild animals and plants, reducing social costs (reducing the costs of cleaning public areas) (Vajić et al., 2022). This type of physical activity in the natural environment represents the mutual connection between man and nature, the human need for movement and the ecological awareness of the individual. A large number of world tourist destinations in their diverse offer within their natural environments offer: mountain biking, hiking, kayaking, padel, tennis, crossfit, yoga, running, golf, sailing, fishing, horseback riding, etc.

Many sports clubs take the initiative regarding environmental actions and activities, so they work on educating athletes and spectators about the importance of cleaning polluted areas, planting forests, trees, etc. Such activities are also carried out by plogging or kayaking, where participants not only spend time in nature, but also work on collecting waste while driving. The overall impact of eco-sport tourism is aimed at achieving the goals of sustainable development, including protecting the climate,

protecting human life on land and the environment, ensuring economic growth and sustainable consumption.

Research by the Tourism Commission of Canada showed that 38% of Canadians travel to certain areas for active recreation (most often in nature), 36% travel for tourism, and only 2.5% prefer business travel, while the rest prefer other types of tourism. The most common activities that Canadian tourists prefer are nature walks and hiking, visits to national parks, sport hunting and fishing, observing flora and fauna, learning about the history and culture of the local population (Totonova, 2011).

In accordance with the principles of eco-sport tourism, a large number of events are organized where the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, physical exercise, environmental protection, etc. is carried out. In the period of May 25-26, 2024 a summer eco-sports festival called "On the meadow" was held in Moscow in the "Caricino" museum-reserve, with over 50 different activities. Participants of this festival dedicated to eco-sport could take part in scientific workshops, educational walks, as well as listen to lectures on flora and fauna. As part of this manifestation dedicated to the preservation of the environment and the importance of physical exercise, i.e. their harmony, the "*eco-culture and plogging*" race is held - a race that involves running as a physical activity and at the same time collecting waste and cleaning green areas. The main goal of this event is to educate and raise the awareness of young people about the importance of preserving the environment through regular physical activity and the understanding of human action and the impact on nature itself and its environment through its activities (Moskva 24, 2024).

Eco-sports tourism in Russia has become increasingly popular among domestic tourists. National parks where nature is preserved and protected are the most suitable for this developing area of tourism, and on the other hand, they are places where the local population lives in accordance with the eco-system and rules that do not disturb nature and its surroundings. By 2013, there were 40 national parks in the Russian Federation (by 2020, 64), and each of them had its own specificity and uniqueness. In Chukotka Autonomous District (41st National Park), a new National Park "Berengiya" was created (Polyanskaya, 2013). The Chukotka Peninsula is rich in: thermal springs, monuments of cultural, historical and archaeological heritage, and the greatest uniqueness is the autochthonous inhabitants: Eskimos and Chukchi. The territory of this unique nature park is home to more than a thousand species of plants, polar bears, Pacific walruses, and a large number of different species of birds. By decree of Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on January 18, 2013, the Berengia National Park became part of the Russian-American protected

area. This transboundary reserve stretches from Berengia in the Russian Federation to the Bering Land Bridge National Park in the USA. The very idea of creating an international national park in the Bering Strait region arose at the end of the 20th century (in 1990), when Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush signed a statement on the establishment of a Soviet-American park, and due to subsequent political events, this idea and agreement were not came to life by 2013.

DISHARMONY OF SPORTS AND NATURE

The negative side of eco-sport tourism refers to the increase in the number of tourists who cause disruptions in the functioning of flora and fauna in a certain area and have a certain impact on the environment, which violates the first priority, which is: the protection of nature. In some way, the media influence the advertising of certain eco-sport destinations, which attracts a large number of people and encourages the mass, thus automatically disrupting the primary idea of eco-sport tourism. With the increase in the number of such tourists, there is increased pressure to develop such eco-areas and become more inclusive and resort-like (construction of more accommodation and supporting facilities, development of business and supporting facilities, etc.), which overall leads to the potential destruction of habitats, i.e. endangering local life environment, wild animal life, plant life, etc. Eco-sport tourism has an increasingly negative impact on the environment, so the question of representing eco-sport tourism with the main goal of healthy, sustainable development is increasingly being raised at the global level. In a situation where eco-sport tourism is developing, we must also talk about the degree of development of this type of tourism in certain natural areas, certain problems regarding the application and protection of ecological-sport resources.

Man is becoming more and more embedded in nature and in that way he is harming both himself and nature itself. It is known that economic activities that are related to nature have a negative impact, and recently there are more and more researches and facts that point to sports activities that damage nature. Some sports that take place in nature (rock climbing, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, etc.) affect the flora and fauna in nature. Even the concept of sport ecology appears, which clearly indicates that sport has a negative interaction with nature and that users (recreationalists, athletes, tourists) need to be guided and respected about their relationship to nature according to precisely defined rules regarding its protection. The Department of Sports Ecology of the University of

Bayreuth (Bavaria) has provided data in its research that outdoor sports and the environment are closely related, but that this relationship also has negative consequences to the detriment of nature: disruption of the ecosystem and impact on the environment. As much as eco-sport tourists are directed towards the guideline that it is more pleasant, healthier and more useful to carry out sports activities in an ecological, natural and clean environment, on the other hand, nature should not be destroyed and its resources consumed under the influence of sports activities. It is this relationship between health-sport-environment that is gaining increasing importance on the social, economic and political level (as part of the promotion and campaigns of political structures that promote the protection of nature and the environment). The Department of Sport Ecology in Bayreuth, Germany, in its research includes certain sports (either recreational in an ecological environment, or professional) such as: motor sports, diving, skiing, cycling, mountaineering (Aleksejeva, 2020). Based on their impact on the environment (whether they impact, to what extent and what are the consequences of that impact, etc.), recommendations are developed for sports, environmental associations, clubs and organizations. In some areas where the ecosystem is disturbed, climbing is recommended as an activity in halls rather than in the mountains. Ecological concepts for the regulation of tourism are also being developed, and an increasing number of states, cities, and local communities are applying these eco-concepts, which include certain measures that are implemented for the protection of flora and fauna on the one hand, and on the other hand, the exercise of eco-sports under certain conditions and with restrictions, as for example was done in Franconian Switzerland (Bavaria, Germany - where certain nature reserves are divided into three zones). Ecosport tourists pose a serious threat to the Bavarian nature reserve, where rare plants grow, and peregrine falcons and owls nest on the rocks. For this reason, Franconian Switzerland is divided into three zones. The first zone is closed for tourists, in the second zone there are periods when rock climbing is allowed or prohibited for eco-sport tourists depending on the period when the birds hatch eggs and take care of their young and the period when the young birds leave the parental nest. The ban is lifted after the adult offspring of the birds leave the parental nest (Alekseeva, 2020). The third zone is completely open to tourists. Depending on the sports practiced in nature as part of eco-sports tourism and destinations, there are different eco-concepts that aim to satisfy both tourists and nature and create a kind of balance, which is very difficult nowadays.

The mass of tourists to certain protected areas for the promotion and practice of any form of tourism (including eco-sport tourism) often leads

to the suppression of the local population from their climate, which leads to the violation of the integrity of that local community and prevents them from achieving some economic benefits and uses. The increased number of tourists in a certain area reflects on the natural behavior of wild animals, then on the quality of the soil and plant life in general, causing damage to the entire ecosystem of a certain area. The fact that many tourist organizations promote eco-sports content (programs) of some destinations for the purpose of profit is also not negligible, while totally neglecting the ecological principles on which eco-sport tourism is based (minimizing the impact on the environment and the local community). The mass of any form of tourism, regardless of economic profit and similar benefits, also has negative effects that can be classified into several categories: water pollution, soil pollution, air pollution, disruption of the landscape, endangering biodiversity, excessive consumption, endangering the local population (Davidović, 2021).

Although the material resources that are earned from eco-sport tourism are mostly invested in the construction and improvement of local eco-systems, the question of the positive influence of people (actors) who practice this type of tourism is raised. Many studies talk about the negative impact of eco-sport tourism on flora and fauna, which leads to various changes in nature itself and biodiversity. Protected areas are becoming "targets" and desirable destinations for people who want physical activity, nature and adventure. An increasing number of states, cities, and local communities are creating eco-concepts that include certain measures that are implemented for the protection of flora and fauna on the one hand, and on the other hand, the practice of eco-sports is enabled under certain conditions and with restrictions. An increasing number of tourists in one area (region) also means a stronger impact on nature and the environment, and nature protection is a "*conditio sine qua non*" - a condition without which sustainable tourism development is not possible (Tanković et al., 2014).

Switzerland has worked for many years to establish the principles of economy (and became one of the richest in Europe and beyond) and all with standards that protect natural and cultural resources. It is one of the first countries in the world to recognize the link between tourism - ecology - sport - environmental protection - sustainable development. To all tourists who want to go to a chosen destination, Switzerland offers an excellent system of public transport based on environmental protection: solar energy is used - ships, buses use natural fuel, which enables the quick arrival of tourists to the desired destination. When it comes to accommodation, the use of renewable energy sources, recycling and waste disposal dominate.

The most popular sports activities that are practiced in the natural environment are cycling, hiking, and hunting, and they are all adapted to nature, that is, they are in line with the sustainable development of the environment. Solar panels and wind energy, water retaining walls, protected flora and fauna, the sensitivity of the population in nature protection, contribute to biodiversity and the sustainable development of tourism, which led the Federal Government to incorporate the sustainable development of tourism and sports into the Sustainable Development Strategy (2012-2015), which contained a structured action plan based on three dimensions of sustainability: economic efficiency, environmental responsibility and social solidarity (Tanković et al., 2014)

In recent years, a great interest in various areas of tourism has been observed, which has led to the limitation of certain destinations in terms of capacity. This implies infrastructural maximums in terms of tourists, the capacities of the natural environment, the socio-cultural sustainability of the local population, as well as the worsening of climate change through greenhouse gases (Jaggi, 2022).

Since 2020, the public company Kopaonik National Park, in order to protect natural resources, has introduced a monetary fee for all motor vehicles that enter the territory of Kopaonik NP, all with the aim of reducing the large number of motor vehicles on the one hand, and on the other hand, investing those revenues in preservation of natural resources of Kopaonik NP. Eco-sport tourists, as well as a large number of tourists who engage in skiing (in winter) or other activities during the summer, during a tour of this national park that represents natural, cultural and national wealth, must follow certain rules: disposal of waste in prescribed places, movement pedestrians only on paths marked for that purpose, respect for the protection zones of the national park and their limited access, hunting and fishing only with the consent and permission of the competent authorities of the NP, prohibition of picking and damaging plant species, mushrooms, forest fruits (there must be consent from the NP), disturbing the animal world is prohibited. Within this national park, there are a large number of hiking trails, hiking trails, picnic areas, and viewpoints. Sports activities are dominated by: hiking, walking tours, cycling, running, orienteering, paragliding, ATV trails (all-terrain vehicles). Within Kopaonik National Park there are thirteen nature reserves that are in the first degree of protection (PC National Park Kopaonik, 2024). All forms of tourism, taking into account first of all the burden caused by the construction of a large number of accommodation facilities, i.e. urbanization, led to a problem with the sewage network on Kopaonik, which directly flows into the river courses and nature, which affects the

quality of the soil, air, and the very life and stay on Kopaonik. Due to excessive urbanization, this NP also has a problem with water supply. The overall situation in this area indicates the need for systematic collection and removal of waste water not only from the tourist center but also from local settlements on Kopaonik. It is also necessary to build a wastewater treatment system that depends on the specifics of the climate and terrain, and to expand the existing water supply network.

Tourism, sports and the environment are interconnected and significantly influence each other. Sports activities in nature rely on a moderate temperature, clean air, clean water, an environment that is safe for the participants, and yet on the other hand, all those sports activities can have a negative impact on the environment. Global problems related to the environment (increased air temperature, melting of ice, rockfalls, warming of the ocean, etc.) have profound consequences for the natural environment and the sports activities that take place in it. Coastal erosion, storms, changes in the speed of water currents and floods are nature's response to human activity, and they affect outdoor activities and can affect the safety and ability of participants in sports activities. In those parts of nature where the construction of accommodation facilities for the realization of some tourist and sports activities occurs, there is a loss of ecosystems and biodiversity, and the energy and water resources consumed by such facilities can be significant and can create large amounts of waste.

In almost all sports activities in nature, it is necessary to become familiar with one's natural environment, to develop awareness, importance, appreciation of natural processes and characteristics (weather, water, soil, etc.). Sport has the power to change the world, which is a significant, real and powerful tool for strengthening social bonds and promoting sustainable development, peace and solidarity at the global level. Sport as such should not endanger the natural environment, but should become an effective instrument for promoting environmental protection and sustainability.

CONCLUSION

In its essence, eco-sport tourism can and must be based on the creation, respect and strengthening of certain standards: persistence in protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, support to the local population in nature conservation, respect for local and historical landmarks, strengthening awareness of physical exercise as the basis of health etc. Any form of travel to nature with the aim of exercising physical activities does not automatically imply a form of eco-sport tourism. The mere presence of man in nature certainly means that the impact on nature is large and often

negative, and if many tourist organizations promote green or ecological sports tourism in order to create economic profit, the only thing they have in common is that it all represents the exploitation of nature. Eco-sport tourism on a global level can be seen as a trend, but for many true nature guardians who create, strengthen and preserve their health through physical exercise, it is an experience that makes them richer, and for some it is a way of life (living with nature). Human embeds himself more and more in nature and thus damages it, and then himself. Eco-sport tourism is a useful resource for identifying destinations and trips that are based on sustainability and where the interests of preserving flora and fauna, local culture and population are a priority only and only if that idea (privilege) is based on being above profit. The question of the relationship between health, eco-sports, tourism and the environment is gaining increasing social, economic, even political importance and is increasingly the subject of debates based on various projects, programs of international organizations and even the United Nations itself, which with great care and responsibility devote to these relationships and topics. At the UN summit in New York held in 2015, the United Nations adopted resolution A/RES/70/1 - Transforming our world the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN 2030 Agenda represents a universal strategy and the signatory states are expected to mobilize all resources so that the goals by 2030 are achieved through 17 goals, including three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The 2030 Agenda, as explained by the UN, envisages: *"a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, equality and non-discrimination"* (UN, 2015).

Through the promotion of values such as respect, tolerance, protection of the environment and nature in general, eco-sport tourism becomes an important factor for sustainable development. Many sports activities in the natural environment: hiking, kayaking, skiing, paragliding and many other sports offer tourists a unique view of the environment. These sports record their growth in terms of realization in nature, and only tourists who practice them every day become more and more ecologically aware. Eco-sports activities in a natural environment tend to focus on building self-confidence and cultivating endurance and perseverance. Many group activities (hiking, canoeing, etc.) increase self-confidence, build trust and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, eco-sport tourism is becoming a sector of tourism that records constant growth, which is a consequence of the increased interest of the number of tourists in certain destinations that are not yet sufficiently explored, and which offer eco-sport contents and activities in

accordance with certain potentials of a certain area. All these activities lead to potential endangerment of nature and its environment. The mass of tourists, the disruption of the eco-system, the impact on the flora and fauna, soil pollution, water pollution, indicate that man increasingly, through the idea of eco-sport tourism, enters into a relationship with nature that is one-sided and has the negative consequence of its slight destruction. All those negative consequences that occur not only in eco-sport tourism but also in other areas of life, require systemic changes starting from food production, energy generation, management of natural resources, using materials, planned physical activities in spaces and places that do not disturb the balance of nature etc. We should not forget the fact that not every physical activity that is potentially healthy and useful for humans is healthy and recommended for nature and its environment. Some sports that endanger the environment are: skydiving (massive carbon footprint), golf (large amount and consumption of water and chemicals), motor racing (absolute carbon emission), motorized water sports (fuel consumption and negative impact on the biosphere) and the like. That is why it is necessary to make a balance regarding the choice of physical activity in the natural environment (activities that do not disturb the ecosystem and the environment), while respecting ecological principles, and all with the aim of protecting the environment, and not with the aim of satisfying one's own needs that lead to the destruction of natural potentials and resources.

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