

Article

Measuring Residents' and Visitors' Satisfaction with Sustainable Tourism—The Case of “Rusanda” Nature Park, Vojvodina Province

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Abstract: The Nature Park “Rusanda” (NPR) is a designated area under the second category of national protection. Situated in the Vojvodina Province, in the northern region of Serbia, its accessibility to a substantial number of international visitors is enhanced by its proximity to Romania and Hungary. Lake Rusanda and the salt marsh habitats render this region a sanctuary for rare avian species. This ecological significance has led to the NPR being designated as an IBA area—an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area by Birdlife. Beyond its natural attributes, the NPR stands out for its diverse cultural heritage, stemming from the local population residing in its immediate vicinity. A notable characteristic is the diverse ethnic makeup, contributing to a wide array of cultures, traditional attire, original folk music, customs, and cuisine, collectively forming a distinctive cultural heritage unique to this part of Vojvodina. To assess the status of sustainable tourism and its impact on the satisfaction of both residents and tourists within the NPR, the Prism of Sustainability model (PoS) is employed. In the quantitative approach, a survey questionnaire was utilized as a research tool, with a total of 840 participants included through a randomized sampling technique. Regression analysis of the study’s results indicates that sustainable tourism exerts a significant influence on the contentment of local people and tourists in the NPR. Given the presence of diverse ecological and societal elements, in addition to the existence of rare flora and fauna species, the central thrust in tourism development should focus on preserving and involving local residents in the planning and progress of tourism initiatives. The primary types of tourism that are poised for success in the NPR encompass ecotourism, wellness and spa tourism, nature-based tourism, birdwatching, scientific research tourism, and excursions.

Keywords: sustainable tourism; Prism of Sustainability model; local community’ satisfaction



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1. Introduction

The Nature Park “Rusanda” (NPR) is situated in Vojvodina (Northern Serbia). The area of NPR is 1160 ha and covers the territory of the city of Zrenjanin (Melenci settlement) and the territory of the municipality of Novi Bečej (Kumane settlement). The significant feature of this protected area is its good position in relation to the cities of Serbia and the region, which prompted the creation of a traffic corridor between them. The proximity

to Romania and Hungary, the diversity of flora and fauna, salt marsh habitats, and salt wetlands are all noteworthy. The cultural richness of the inhabitants living next to the protected area, the existence of a spa complex with a healing tradition since 1867, the healing properties of lake sediment and water, etc., are also prominent [1].

Various factors that characterize the NPR has enabled the development of nature-based tourism, ecotourism, wellness and spa tourism, health tourism, cultural tourism, scientific research, excursion tourism, schools in nature, recreational sports tourism, and other forms of tourism. Including these various resources, a complementary tourist entertainment feature can be offered [2].

When planning tourism in the NPR, the role of the population is very important [3]. It involves the process of planning, promotion, management, and control of tourism development [4]. Ensuring ecological, economic, and sociocultural benefits is of great importance for the sustainability of tourism in the protected area and for the inhabitants [5,6]. The extent of its advancement and its influence on the contentment of the indigenous population and visitors can be assessed by considering four facets of sustainable tourism: environmental, financial, sociocultural, and organizational [7–10]. Each of the dimensions can point to certain weaknesses in the process of planning and developing tourism in the NPR. Also, an individual observation of each dimension can identify certain unused potentials, as well as threats that affect the quality of the tourist destination [11].

The subject of study in the article is evaluating the power of sustainable tourism in the NPR on the respondents' satisfaction. Furthermore, the study assesses the existing status of tourism, taking into account ecological, sociocultural, economic, and institutional aspects of sustainability. The obtained results of measuring the degree of satisfaction with sustainable tourism among residents and visitors can indicate the necessary action measures aimed at the identification, proper valorization, and implementation of insufficiently used or unused tourist potentials for tourism development [12–14].

The research objective is to enquire about the level of tourism development in the NPR. Moreover, it is important to determine the used and unused potentials of tourism development. This makes it possible to establish guidelines and proposals for future tourism development, which must have nature protection as an imperative due to the nature of the protected area, [15,16]. Also, by analyzing the answers received from the group of respondents, the influence of natural and social factors of the NPR on ecological, economic, sociocultural, and institutional sustainability can be determined [17].

In this study, the Prism of Sustainability model (POS) was used, conceived on the use of surveys as a research technique. By using written and online questionnaires, a complete set of 840 respondents (454 residents and 386 visitors) were surveyed using the random sampling method. Two separate questionnaires were used to survey residents and visitors, respectively, which contain different statements that were modified according to the examination style of the participants in the NPR.

The collected results in this paper can provide important answers to questions related to the proper use of resources for tourism purposes in the NPR. In addition, the given answers will indicate the importance of creating special forms of tourism in the NPR.

At the time of collecting the information, the NPR area was hit by a strong storm on two occasions, 25 days apart, which caused great material damage, both to the NPR and to households in the settlements around the protected area. After these storms, the local population had to repair damage to houses, ancillary buildings, electrical networks, infrastructure, and cultural institutions. This was a significant limitation in this research. Bad weather conditions had an unfavorable impact on our study sample size, leading to a reduction in the number of nature park users.

2. Literature Review

In recent decades, sustainable tourism development has actively included the examination of tourism development in various tourist destinations, including protected areas [18,19], where nature is the primary resource. In protected areas, tourist activities

must comply with protection requirements [20] and the improvement of its values. In addition to the ecological aspect, the administration of these destinations requires establishing sociocultural and economic elements and prerequisites for promoting the sustainable growth of tourism [3,21,22]. Sustainable tourism in protected areas implies the active role of all actors and subjects in the process of planning, management, and control [23,24]. The results of sustainable tourism studies in specific destinations can even be used to plan tourism development in other structurally different tourist regions [25].

The objective of examining sustainable tourism points to the fact that tourism growth must be based on the achievement of numerous positive equivalents of a tourist destination [26]. Each of the development factors plays a major role in a sustainable system [27]. The predominant factors in sustainable tourism expansion in protected areas are environmental, sociocultural, economic, and institutional factors [2,28]. Ensuring the continuous growth of these values is considered important for the creation and development of sustainable tourism in these areas [10].

Defining the sustainable development of tourism in protected areas will help us in creating measures to protect sensitive areas [29]. Those protection measures include an improvement of the principles of environmental protection [11,30], and the satisfaction of residents and visitors. In addition, it is important that the income earned from tourism is directed to tourism development models within protected areas and the preservation of their nature [31,32].

The development of tourist forms in specific areas can significantly contribute to investments in nature protection. Among the significant forms of tourism within protected areas, ecotourism, nature-based tourism, scientific research, educational, and cultural tourism stand out [30,33]. The mentioned forms of tourism can contribute to significant income from tourist consumption [34]. Unlike tourism development in other tourist destinations, in protected areas, it singles out ecological principles as the most important [35]. With the proper development of tourist destinations, the ecological motives of visiting these destinations become complementary. Besides them, the social elements of a destination can influence the creation of a tourism offer [36]. Many research findings related to protected areas emphasize the significance of diversifying particular tourism categories, including adventure, educational, ecotourism, nature-based tourism, birdwatching, and scientific research tourism [26,37,38]. The natural and societal attributes of protected areas as tourist destinations play a pivotal role in fostering these specialized forms of tourism [39,40]. Effective tourism development and vigilant management can enhance the economic and sociocultural merits of these destinations [41–44].

The prevention of negative tourism impacts on the environment within protected areas can be mitigated or even intercepted by legal provisions and the control of the application of measures. It can also be reduced by space-carrying capacity, zoning, resource exploitation control, residents' inclusion in planning and control measures, and other activities [11,41,45–50].

Organizing and controlling tourism growth within preserved areas [11,13,51–54] include the proper use of natural and cultural resources. The main negative changes caused by the development of tourism are the transformation in quality and the impact on the living world. The observed positive changes relate to the strengthening of the role of the local community, the control of legal measures in relation to protected areas, defining the importance of the role of local tradition, culture, and heritage in the tourist offer, etc. [5,55,56].

Holloway and Humphreys [57] describe tourism consumption and the economic aspect of tourism development as significant benefits. In the foreground, they highlight the motives of the autochthonous community to help in tourism development and the preservation of all the values of a destination. The authors assert that, in the global context, the most effective approach to achieve this is by engaging the population in the planning, development, and oversight of tourism.

Certain studies of sustainable tourism were useful to the authors when designing this research and selecting the research area. A similar study model used in the research is presented further in this chapter. The importance of sustainable tourism for the destination was examined through four dimensions of sustainability: ecological, economic, sociocultural, and institutional dimensions. Observing the individual structures of tourism development, these studies identified the strengths and weaknesses of sustainable tourism. The results of these research point to various possibilities for the development of specific forms of tourism in order to implement sustainability in protected areas in the tourist offer. The destination of NPR has a sensitive ecosystem and is attractive for visitors, so in examining the potential for the development of sustainable tourism, the aforementioned research models can be used. This is precisely why the Prism of Sustainability model is applied. The economic dimension of sustainability refers to the importance of the local economy and production that should fulfill the needs of residents by satisfying the economic status. In addition, the economic dimension includes indicators related to the production of domestic products and their availability to users. The ecological dimension uses indicators related to the reduction in negative impacts on the environment by preventing the improper construction of infrastructure and other activities within the protected area. The social dimension includes those indicators related to the realization of interaction between visitors and residents, through the promotion of local culture and the strengthening of the role of all subjects in tourism. The institutional dimension indicates the importance of various subjects through decision-making and legislation, including the participation and inclusion of residents in all processes of tourism planning and development.

The findings from Huayhuaca and colleagues' study [58] highlight that ecological sustainability stands out as the most pivotal factor in the development of tourism within the protected area. Their research focused on evaluating the perspectives of local residents regarding sustainable tourism in Germany's Frankenwald Nature Park. The study's framework was based on the Prism of Sustainability model (PoS). These researchers assessed sustainable tourism across four key dimensions of sustainability: ecological, economic, sociocultural, and institutional dimension. The most significant sustainable tourism impact on respondents' satisfaction is achieved through environmental sustainability. In addition, sociocultural and economic sustainability were singled out as significant dimensions. The scientific contribution of this research is to provide crucial information about the sustainable development of tourism in the protected area, which served in the examination of sustainable tourism in the NPR.

In the research conducted by Stojanović et al. [3], the influence of the evolution of tourism on the attitudes of the local population in the protected area "Gornje Podunavlje" is studied. The objective of the research was to examine numerous case studies and data from local administrations on tourism development planning in this protected area using a qualitative methodology. The outcome of the analyses was to distinguish the sociocultural and ecological aspects of sustainability as relevant when planning the development of tourism. Environmental sustainability includes the application of various protection measures, such as carrying capacity, zoning, and national and international area protection measures. Sociocultural sustainability would be based on a more active promotion of ethnic characteristics of the population. The scientific contribution of this research is reflected in the provision of significant information that can be used to evolve tourism growth strategies at the local, national, and international levels. This research provided significant guidelines when designing a research model for sustainable tourism in the NPR, whose main participants are the population living around this protected area and the cultural heritage they have created.

The research by Asmelash and Kumar [39] was planned to examine sustainable tourism within tourist destinations. The research SEM model (Structural Equation Modeling) was conceived based on the examination of sustainable tourism through all four sustainability pillars. The research aimed to examine several hypotheses. Hypothesis H1: *The ecological dimension of sustainable tourism is directly related to tourist satisfaction, which*

was not confirmed by this research. Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were confirmed, namely that tourists are satisfied with the economic (H2), sociocultural (H3), and institutional dimensions of sustainability (H4). The analysis of the results of the tested hypotheses indicates the need to adopt different measures that should include important activities within this protected area that must be directed toward the protection of flora and fauna, geological phenomena, the controlled use of resources, and others. This also represents a significant scientific contribution of this research.

Furthermore, in the study conducted by Trišić et al. [2], the same model (PoS) was employed to investigate the influence of sustainable tourism on the inhabitants of the Special Nature Reserve “Meadows of Great Bustard” situated in the northern region of Serbia. The authors designed a standardized questionnaire to assess residents’ perspectives on sustainable tourism, considering the four aforementioned sustainability dimensions.

In the previously mentioned studies examining sustainable tourism, the ecological dimension of sustainability is the primary pillar of tourism development planning and the construction of a destination with a sensitive ecosystem. The results of the aforementioned research focus on environmental factors as significant indicators of sustainability. In addition, sociocultural sustainability is singled out as an important segment of tourism development planning and control. The concluding considerations indicate that the application of the research model in the mentioned studies allowed for a detailed examination of the state of sustainable tourism and the potential that enabled ecological, economic, sociocultural, and institutional benefits through the development of a sustainable tourism destination. Therefore, the research described was the basis for the conception of this model, with the help of which the authors examined the state of sustainable tourism in the NPR, including the examination of the impact of sustainable tourism on the satisfaction of residents and visitors. Sustainable tourism has a significant impact on residents’ satisfaction. This research framework was utilized by the authors of this article. It builds upon a previous study conducted in the protected areas of Vojvodina, aiming to enhance the reliability of data related to these areas’ role in shaping the tourism offerings.

3. Research Area

The NPR protected area (protection status originates from 2014) is located in the eastern part of AP Vojvodina (Figure 1), between the towns Zrenjanin (16.5 km) and Novi Bečej [1,59]. The area under examination is situated within the boundaries of two communities: Kumane and Melenci. Within the 1160 hectare NPR (Nature Protection Reserve), protective regulations at the second and third levels have been implemented. In terms of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) categorization, the NPR falls into the fourth category, designated as a Habitat and Species Management Area. The NPR has the international protection status of the IBA area, IPA area, and NATURA 2000 area [1,59].

There is a diversity of plant and animal species on the territory of the NPR, including representatives of flora (235 taxa), birds (211 species), and mammals (31 species). The following rare plant species are present: *Salicornia europaea*, *Salsola soda*, *Suaeda pannonica*, *Bassia sedoides*, *Scorzonera parviflora*, *Silene viscos*, *Trifolium ornithopodioides*, *Aster tripolium* subsp. *pannonicus*, and *Plantago schwarzenbergiana*. The NPR area is the only habitat of crayfish *Branchinecta orientalis*, *B. ferox*, *Heterocypris vitrea*, and *Lymnocythere inopinata* in Serbia. Among the birds, *Falco vespertinus*, *Falco tinnunculus*, *Tadorna tadorna*, *Himantopus himantopus*, *Recurvirostra avosetta*, *Numenius arquata*, *Podiceps nigricollis*, *Anas clypeata*, and *Tringa totanus* stand out here [60]. A typical representative of mammals is *Spermophilus citellus* [1].



Figure 1. Location of the NPR. Source: created by the author.

Rusanda SPA is an important part of this protected area and it is an active spa resort. It is located on the northern shore of the lake with the same name in the settlement of Melenci in the municipality of Zrenjanin. Ever since its establishment in 1867, it has had a healing tradition based on the use of healing properties of mineral mud and water from the salt lake of Rusanda, which is considered one of the best healing spas in the country. This is the largest salt lake in the Carpathian basin [61]. Thermo-mineral water from Lake Rusanda has a curative effect on rheumatic fever, degenerative rheumatism, consequences of trauma, and certain gynecological as well as some other diseases [62]. The spa complex is located inside a park made up of trees hundreds of years old, with an area of four hectares, and is the only wooded area in this part of Vojvodina [1].

4. Methodology

This study builds upon the authors' prior investigations regarding the protected areas of Vojvodina and their sustainable tourism development. Vojvodina, as a geographically and territorially unified region, encompasses approximately 138 protected areas of various types. The authors intend to broaden the scope of their research to encompass a diverse array of these protected areas, differing in structure and protective measures. In this manner, they aim to yield more robust scientific findings pertaining to the progress of sustainable tourism and its influence on the areas under examination. Here, a customized PoS model was applied. Two different questionnaires were used in the survey. One questionnaire was designed to survey residents, while the other was adapted to examine the views of visitors. In the questionnaire design, various research models were employed to investigate how sustainable tourism affects the satisfaction of respondents, as referenced in [2,17,63–65]. Using the PoS model, the aim is to assess how the four dimensions of sustainability influence the contentment of both local people and visitors, as illustrated in Figure 2.

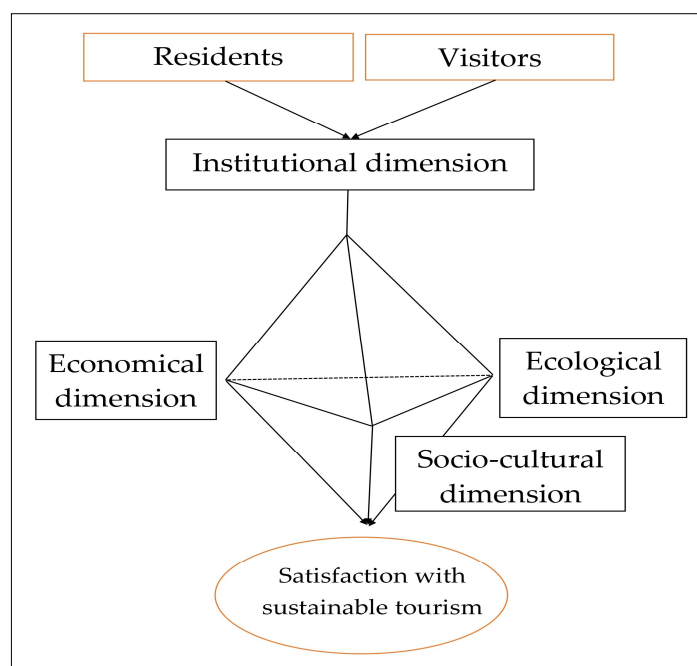


Figure 2. Prism of Sustainability. Source: Trišić et al. [2].

According to the PoS model, the economic dimension includes those indicators that point out the importance of the local economy and production that should fulfill the residents' needs for material well-being and support employment. In addition, the economic dimension includes indicators related to the production of domestic commodities and their availability to users. The ecological dimension concerns indicators related to the reduction in negative impacts on the environment by preventing improper construction of infrastructure and certain activities within the protected area. The social dimension includes indicators that influence the interactions between visitors and residents, through the promotion of local culture and the strengthening of the role of subjects in tourism. The institutional dimension indicates the importance of various entities that make decisions and laws, through the inclusion of residents in these processes. Perceived satisfaction (dependent variable) was measured as a single variable, where respondents were asked to indicate whether and to what extent they were satisfied with sustainable tourism in this protected area. In the questionnaire, through the last 4 statements, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with various aspects of tourism in this protected area (benefits of tourism, importance and impact of tourism on the population, quality of life, and impact of tourism on the attractiveness of the area).

In this paper, statistical data analysis with SPSS v.21 software (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA) is used [66]. What makes this research different from previous ones is that, here, a special questionnaire with customized questions is used to survey visitors. In the authors' earlier studies, it became clear that there were notable variations in how visitors and residents perceive things. This is the reason why a different questionnaire is used in this research to survey visitors and that is why this research is unique.

When replying to the questions, residents and visitors ranked answers using a five-point Likert scale [9,67]. The questionnaire contains 21 statements (Tables 1 and 2), of which four statements refer to respondents' satisfaction with sustainable tourism (Table 3) [2,66]; there are also questions pertaining to the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics. Two questionnaires were used for the survey: one for surveying residents, while the second questionnaire comprised questions that were adapted to the visitors. In both questionnaires, the statements refer to relatively identical indicators. The only difference in the questionnaires is that the statements are adapted to two groups of respondents, so that they can correctly understand the importance of the statement or indicator for the

dimension of sustainability. In these two questionnaires, the questions are grouped into four categories or dimensions of sustainability. The reliability of the received answers was ensured through the individual control of the completed questionnaires, as well as by using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient [2,17,58]. The Cronbach's Alpha was run to test the internal consistency of items, measuring each sustainability dimension, as well as the satisfaction items for the NPR. Indices were computed as the variable means comprising each dimension (independent variables). Four independent latent constructs were examined, representing the four dimensions of the Prism of Sustainability (i.e., environmental, economic, social, institutional). Variables in each construct were coded on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The dependent variable, resident satisfaction with sustainable tourism development, was composed of five survey items (e.g., "my quality of life has improved because of tourism to the NPR"). Finally, a regression analysis revealed the predictive power of each of the four dimensions of sustainability for satisfaction. To measure the degree of impact of sustainable tourism on the respondents, in this research, the authors used a simple regression analysis [17,68]. To enhance the dependability of the findings, the paper employs a tabular format to present a comparative analysis of the results derived from both sets of participants.

Table 1. Residents' perceptions (n = 454).

Items	Residents (n = 454)	
	α	Mean
Dimensions		
Institutional Dimension	0.714	2.57
Visitors are guided through the nature park by trained guides and residents		2.02
Visitors in nature park can see the domestic products		3.06
In the nature park, the manager's instructions on nature protection and visitors activities are followed		2.14
Visitors are provided with information that reflects the history of the reserve, population, and settlements		3.04
Ecological dimension	0.749	3.44
Residents participate in the protection of nature park		3.14
There are facilities, services, and activities available to residents in the nature park		3.54
There are tourist facilities without impacts on the nature park		3.65
Economic dimension	0.719	3.13
Tourism in the nature park benefits the residents		2.94
Tourism in the nature park supports the local economy		3.02
Tourism in the nature park contributes to the employment of the residents		2.18
Local products are available to visitors		3.64
Visitors support the prices of domestic products		3.89
Sociocultural dimension	0.715	3.77
Visitors are interested in home products and crafts		4.24
Visitors are in contact with residents		4.15
Visitors are interested in local traditions and customs		3.33
Visitors visit local cultural facilities and events		3.11
Visitors are interested in historical sites		4.02

Items measured on a five-point Likert agreement scale. α —Cronbach Alpha Reliability.

Table 2. Visitors' perceptions (n = 386).

Items	Visitors (n = 386)	
Dimensions	α	Mean
Institutional Dimension	0.733	3.34
It is possible to get around through the protected area because there are road signs; managers' help is available when choosing a specific road or path		4.05
There is an offer from local producers of homemade products or souvenirs		3.14
In the protected area, I followed the prescribed instructions regarding the protection of the area, ethical codes of conduct, and not allowed activities		4.02
There are written notices and publications about the history of the population and the origin, creation of the protected area		2.15
Ecological dimension	0.765	3.85
I contributed to the protection of the area with my activity		3.57
There are facilities, services, and activities available to visitors in the protected area		3.87
There are tourist facilities without impacts on the environment		4.11
Economic dimension	0.739	3.88
Groups of visitors and various items intended for tourists can be seen in the protected area		3.06
I spent a certain amount of money on tourist needs in the protected area		4.15
Representatives of the local population work in the nature park		3.96
I bought some local products		4.01
The prices of domestic products are not high		4.21
Sociocultural dimension	0.672	4.00
I had the opportunity to become familiar with the production of some domestic agricultural or craft product		3.11
I interacted with representatives of the local population		4.55
I had the opportunity to get to know the local tradition or to attend a local custom		4.01
I visited a cultural institution or a local event		4.12
I visited the historical sites around the protected area		4.22

Items measured on a five-point Likert agreement scale. α —Cronbach Alpha Reliability.

Table 3. Satisfaction of respondents.

Index	Residents (n = 454)		Visitors (n = 386)	
	α	Mean	α	Mean
	0.778	3.85	0.801	3.81
Tourism in the nature park produces various benefits for me		3.64		3.14
I am satisfied because tourism contributes to the increase of the attractiveness of this nature park		4.27		3.92
It is important that there is tourism in the nature park		4.31		4.14
I am satisfied with the state of tourism in the nature park		3.18		4.03

Thematic groups on social networks (online) and personal contacts with respondents (written form of the questionnaire) were used to collect respondents' answers. Respondents were selected by means of a random sample method. A total of 840 respondents were surveyed (454 residents and 386 visitors). In-person interviews were conducted with a combined total of 294 respondents, consisting of 194 local people and 100 visitors, representing 35% of the survey participants. The settlements from which the residents were polled are Zrenjanin, Kumane, and Melenci. The settlements of Kumane (about 3000 inhabitants) and Melenci (about 6000 inhabitants) are the only settlements situated in close proximity to this protected area. The largest number of surveyed visitors were domestic tourists, at 81%.

Romania, Croatia, Hungary, and Montenegro were the countries where foreign visitors came from.

The survey was carried out from April to September 2023. Every questionnaire received was carefully reviewed, and all of them were deemed suitable for statistical analysis. The survey guaranteed anonymity, and respondents, through questionnaire completion, provided consent for utilizing the gathered data for scientific research and subsequent publication of scientific findings.

5. Results

According to the answers, the majority of respondents (both groups) were female (61%), and the average age of the respondents was 46 (from 18 to 78). In total, 62% of respondents have a secondary vocational education, 12% have completed elementary education, 25% have higher or higher education, and 1% of respondents have a master's degree or high education.

The data underwent a reliability check for the variables using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient [2] during the statistical analysis. The indices were calculated as the average values of each dimension, which represent the independent variables [2,17]. Table 1 displays the mean values for the sustainability dimensions as reported by the surveyed local people. Table 2 shows the average values of sustainability dimensions obtained by surveying visitors.

The data reveal that the average level of satisfaction with the progress of sustainable tourism development is 3.85 for one group of respondents and 3.81 for the other group (as displayed in Table 3).

By applying regression analysis, it is possible to determine the influence of each individual dimension of sustainability on tourism and the respondents' satisfaction with the degree of its development [68–70]. The obtained results indicate that all four assumptions about the sustainability of tourism development are supported by both residents (31%) and visitors (34%), which is explained by the variances ($R_1^2 = 0.312$; $R_2^2 = 0.343$) (Table 4).

Table 4. The regression analysis (n = 840).

Satisfaction with Sustainability Dimensions	Residents		Visitors	
	β^1	p-Value	β^1	p-Value
Institutional	0.269	0.022	0.314	0.044
Ecological	0.291	0.038	0.299	0.067
Economic	0.202	0.031	0.284	0.056
Sociocultural	0.344	0.058	0.303	0.064

¹ Standardized β value used. $R_1^2 = 0.312$; $R_2^2 = 0.343$.

6. Discussion

If we analyze the obtained results, we can observe a relative compatibility in the values of both groups of respondents. The reliability of the obtained answers was examined with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Table 1). The institutional dimension (four items) has values of 0.71 and 0.73. The ecological dimension (three items), has values of 0.75 and 0.76. The economic dimension (five items) shows values of 0.72 and 0.74, while the sociocultural dimension (five items) has coefficient values of 0.71 and 0.67. The sociocultural dimension of sustainability has the lowest coefficient value in visitors' responses. Through the analysis, we can conclude that all variables can be accepted as reliable. As underscored by Cottrell et al. [68] and Trišić et al. [2], the value " α " at 0.60, although relatively low, can be considered a credible choice for surveys involving six or fewer items. This implies that one can confidently use the responses of all participants and the resultant average values for an in-depth analysis of sustainable tourism's impact on the satisfaction of both local people and visitors.

The institutional sustainability dimension was ranked relatively lower when evaluated by both groups of respondents (2.54 and 3.34). Visitors identified the absence of written

notices and publications on the historical aspects and development of the NPR (2.15). The existence of various brochures and information materials is very important for visitors. In this way, the education and presentation of all significant tourist values are carried out directly. With the help of these advertising tools, visitors are educated about culture, tradition, population history, and cultural and natural values. When analyzing the obtained results, we can conclude that, in order to improve the state of sustainable tourism in the NPR, it is necessary to develop institutional values more significantly. The process of tourism progress should integrate activities related to the education of tourists about the specificities of local products and their origin, as well as their impact on the protection of the area. This can result in strengthening interaction between residents and visitors [71], which positively affects the sociocultural aspect of tourism growth. The part of institutions in the sustainable tourism development of NPR must be more significant. If we analyze visitors' responses within the institutional dimension, we can conclude that the state of the infrastructure and the existence of legal legislation enable the strengthening of this sustainability dimension. Strengthening the institutional values of NPR can be through the development of tourist niches. By creating different niches, where ecotourism, nature-based tourism, scientific research tourism, wellness and spa tourism, events, etc., are developed, the role of local people and visitors in the development of tourism is strengthened.

Both groups of respondents evaluated the sociocultural dimension with the highest rates (3.77 and 4.00). If we analyze the responses of residents, we can conclude that visitors are very interested in all the values of the destination that can be integral parts of a tourist offer. Domestic products, crafts, customs, events, and historical sites are the subject of interest for visitors. It is an important aspect of tourism development planning and in the creation of a tourist offer for the NPR. The residents' answers completely coincide with the visitors' answers, who confirmed the importance of these elements of the tourist offer to a noticeably greater extent. The sociocultural dimension of sustainability has a significant impact on sustainable tourism and respondents' satisfaction with sustainable tourism. The mentioned potentials should be used for planning the strengthening of tourism development through [72–74] cultural and educational forms and schools in nature. Through these forms of tourism, visitors can be more significantly educated about the cultural and natural values of the NPR.

The sustainability aspect related to the environment (3.44 and 3.85) also has significant average values in both groups of respondents. All respondents expressed the importance of tourist facilities to have no bad consequences for the environment of the destination. According to the respondents' answers, these facilities are equally accessible to residents and visitors. Within the framework of strengthening the ecological values of tourism development in the NPR, a more crucial involvement of residents and visitors in activities aimed at nature protection is needed. In particular, this can be achieved through the development of ecotourism, nature-based tourism, wellness and spa tourism, sports tourism, scientific research tourism, birdwatching, educational tourism, and various schools in nature. These activities directly strengthen the environmental awareness of all participants in the planning, growth, management, and control of tourism expansion. The prosperity of these types of tourism also makes the ecological values of the NPR stronger. By analyzing the total value, we can draw the conclusion that the environmental dimension of sustainability makes an outstanding contribution to the respondents' satisfaction.

The economic dimension of sustainability has relatively average values from both groups of respondents (3.13 and 3.88). Residents rated the lowest score for the claims regarding tourism creating jobs for residents. Visitors rated the lowest for the durability of items intended for tourists. These data can be taken into account when creating a local tourist offer. Visitors' responses indicate a need for local products and items. On the other hand, the offer does not ensure the adequate satisfaction of these needs.

Increasing the domestic local production of items and their sale intended for tourists can directly affect the employment of residents. This process can significantly affect the entire local economy and improve the economic benefits of tourism development. Through

tourism, the necessary finances [75,76] can be provided, including donations, entrance fees charging and renting props, introducing tax rates for tourism retailers and business entities in tourism, and other activities. By analyzing the obtained values, it can be concluded that the economic dimension contributes to sustainable tourism development and that it strongly affects the satisfaction of all respondents.

By analyzing the respondents' satisfaction with sustainable tourism, we can identify relatively similar values (Table 3). The results for the overall average satisfaction of residents and visitors with the development of sustainable tourism are 3.85 and 3.81. Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients of the variables are 0.78 and 0.80, which indicate that we can consider the respondents' answers to be reliable for analysis. All the respondents pointed out that it is significant that tourism is increasing in NPR. They pointed out that tourism provides well-being and that it affects the attractiveness of the destination. It is necessary to include residents in tourism development more significantly, which visitors also support. Visitors expect help from residents in various tourist activities in every way. In this manner, the connection between residents and visitors is directly built, which is a key link in sustainable tourism [4]. Thus, the development of specific tourism forms in the NPR can result in visitors acquiring more significant knowledge about local culture [77]. One of the principles of sustainable tourism is the development of environmental awareness among residents and visitors [78,79]. When planning tourism development, environmental awareness development is of great importance [80–82]. Upon conducting a regression analysis, it is evident that all sustainability dimensions play a vital role in promoting sustainable tourism and significantly influence the satisfaction levels of the respondents, as indicated in Table 4. Both ecological and sociocultural sustainability dimensions displayed significant impacts on sustainability within both respondent groups. Sustainable tourism appears to exert a slightly greater influence on visitor satisfaction. Upon scrutinizing the results, it becomes apparent that sustainable tourism plays a key role in fostering a sense of satisfaction among participants in the tourism industry, aligning with the primary objective of this research.

7. Conclusions

Studying tourism in different destinations can serve to identify numerous unused potentials, which can affect the image of the tourist destination to a certain extent. Without resources such as nature and cultural heritage, it is impossible to talk about tourism and its development. That is why the key challenge in the development of modern tourism is the preservation of natural and cultural tourist resources for future generations. Protected areas are attractive destinations due to the increasing need for visitors to turn to nature. Meeting tourist needs in nature provides multiple benefits [83]. In addition to recreational benefits, visitors to the protected area improve their knowledge and awareness of ecology, protection of habitats and species, ethno-social values of the destination, culture, traditions, and other values [84,85]. Establishing the status and regime of protection, adopting ethical codes, zoning space, and defining and applying the carrying capacity, are just some of the important activities when including protected areas in a tourist offer [86]. Moreover, it is extremely important to include residents in all tourism development activities. This directly provides economic benefits for the local community, through new jobs and the promotion of domestic products intended for tourists. The sociocultural and institutional values of the destination are directly improved by strengthening contacts between residents and visitors. The local population is the best promoter of their own culture and tradition. Sustainable tourism encompasses various ecological, sociocultural, and economic aspects, commonly referred to as the 'triple approach' in sustainable tourism [87]. Ultimately, the advancement of sustainability in protected areas of tourism yields ecological, economic, sociocultural, and institutional advantages. These benefits extend to residents, tourists, as well as managers, the protected area itself, the legal framework, the region, and the state [88].

The results of this work are that in the NPR, sustainable tourism is at a certain level of development and that there are significant necessities to improve its value. The research

model included collecting views on tourism development from residents and visitors. With such a technique utilized in the research, the authors tried to reach the most reliable scientific results. The implementation of the PoS model facilitated the assessment and analysis of destination, tourism, and tourism-related aspects from the perspective of all four dimensions of sustainability: institutional, ecological, economic, and sociocultural. This approach streamlined the process of identifying the examined factors that have varying impacts on the state of sustainable tourism. Both respondent groups indicated that the ecological and sociocultural dimensions were the most crucial aspects of sustainability.

Based on the analysis of the results of this research and the results of the research used in the constitution of this model [2,3,39,58], which refer to the ecological sustainability of tourism development, it is concluded that protected areas have significant potential for sustainable tourism development. It is also obvious that a substantial amount of research, to a significant extent, distinguish environmental sustainability as the basis of this development. This is also the result of this research. These particular data can be used when planning and improving specific forms of tourism, such as educational tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, scientific research, rural tourism, health tourism, sports, and other different forms of tourism based on natural resources.

Upon analyzing the results of sustainable tourism research in destinations with a sensitive ecosystem [2,3,39,58], it can be stated that there is a significant connection with the results of this research. The guidelines, which were taken from previous research, related to the way in which it is possible to thoroughly examine the state of sustainable tourism in protected areas, and these are the four dimensions mentioned. The ecological and sociocultural dimensions of sustainability are singled out by the respondents as the most important dimensions. This result will provide important information during the development of local, regional, and national tourism development strategies, where the significant role of protected areas in the sustainable development of tourism is highlighted.

It is relevant to carry out constant field research. That is why the authors strive to compile knowledge about the level of development of sustainable tourism in Vojvodina and in the countries of the region through scientific works. These will be a continuation of this research. A comparative analysis, which will also include the results of this research, can lead to more reliable results considering the conditions and opportunities for sustainable tourism development in protected areas, both in the world and in Serbia.

The authors will strive to consider all possibilities and provide guidelines in order to create a unique tourist offer in this protected area based on ecotourism and health tourism, which should be the primary forms of tourist activity in the NPR.

In upcoming studies focusing on sustainable tourism in the NPR, the researchers will explore avenues in enhancing the preservation of the natural heritage and ecosystems. This will encompass the investigation of biodiversity management, enhancements to local infrastructure, architectural significance, and cultural heritage. Additionally, the researchers will analyze ways to increase local community engagement across all activities and reinforce cultural values and traditions within the destination. The evaluation will also extend to employment prospects for residents and the growth of small local enterprises, among other opportunities.

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