

## Strategic approach to the development of ecotourism in Bor District, Serbia

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**Abstract:** The increase in ecotourism popularity at a global level is a consequence of the increased human concern for the state of natural resources. This type of alternative tourism is increasingly present in tourist trends around the world. For developing countries, ecotourism can be an opportunity for accelerating economic development by exploiting natural resources, without changing their original state. Although it offers great opportunities, the management of tourism in protected or unprotected natural assets is a great challenge. The importance of integrating the actions of all stakeholders and the usage of strategic approach are often neglected. The aim of this paper is to generate strategies for the development of ecotourism in Bor and its surroundings. For this purpose, a combined SWOT-TOWS methodology is applied. Based on the obtained results, nine strategies are proposed, whose implementation would enable the usage of natural and cultural and historical potentials for the revival of ecotourism in this area.

**Keywords:** ecotourism, strategy, SWOT, TOWS, Bor District

**JEL classification:** Q57

## Strategijski pristup razvoju ekoturizma u okolini grada Bora, Srbija

**Sažetak:** Porast popularnosti ekoturizma na globalnom nivou posledica je povećane zabrinutosti čoveka za stanje prirodnih resursa. Ovaj vid alternativnog turizma je sve prisutniji u turističkim kretanjima širom sveta. Za zemlje u razvoju, ekoturizam može predstavljati priliku da unaprede svoj ekonomski razvoj eksploatacijom prirodnih resursa, kojom se ne narušava njihovo izvorno stanje. Iako pruža velike mogućnosti, upravljanje turizmom u zaštićenim ili nezaštićenim prirodnim dobrima predstavlja veliki izazov. Vrlo često se zanemaruje važnost integracije svih stejkholdera i strateški pristup. Cilj istraživanja u ovom radu je generisanje strategija razvoja ekoturizma u gradu Boru i njegovoj okolini. U tu svrhu, primenjena je kombinovana SWOT-TOWS metodologija. Na osnovu dobijenih rezultata, predloženo je devet strategija čija bi implementacija omogućila iskorišćavanje prirodnih i kulturno-istorijskih potencijala u oživljavanju ekoturizma ovog kraja.

**Ključne reči:** ekoturizam, strategija, SWOT, TOWS, grad Bor

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## **1. Introduction**

Tourism is usually seen as a service activity that contributes to increasing national GDP. A tourism development level varies from a country to country, although they all have certain resources that can attract tourists around the world. Natural potentials, without any doubt, find their place at the very top of the pyramid of a tourist demand. In that sense, a healthy or preserved environment is a prerequisite for the development of modern forms of tourism.

The end of the 20th century was characterized by the increasing awareness of people about the negative effects of their activities on nature. However, the increased presence of news about the alarming ecological situation in media was fruitful. The consumer habits of a society began to be questioned, and focus was increasingly redirected to the products whose characteristics do not hamper the environment. These changes were also reflected in tourism, i.e. the emergence of its alternative forms. One of them is ecotourism. The beginnings of ecotourism are linked to the establishment of the first national parks, more precisely to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in the United States in 1872. It was the impetus for the opening of many other national parks throughout the USA, Canada, Australia, while they were established in Europe 30 years later.

In addition to the fact that ecotourism is considered a type of nature-based tourism, this concept is very complex, and there is no universal definition of it. One of the most accepted definitions is one formulated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) which starts from the following notion of ecotourism: “Ecotourism represents all forms of tourism in which the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas” (UNWTO, 2001). It differs from other forms of nature-based tourism in its specifics such as education, recreation, and adventure (Laarman & Durst, 1987). Its educational dimension is emphasized parallel with minimizing the negative impacts on the natural and socio-cultural segments.

The modern age is characterized by the expansion of ecotourism. The emergence and forms of ecotourism are influenced by factors such as the population density of an area, the state of the natural environment, and numerous differences in culture. In this way, different trends in the development of ecotourism have been emerging. Statistically speaking, ecotourism trips in Europe increased by 7% in the period from 1997 to 2004, while 2004 was specific considering that 22 million ecotourism trips were recorded, representing the share of 9% in the total structure of all tourist trips. Given the overbearing pollution at the global level and the growing environmental awareness of the human population, it can be assumed that this form of tourism will be increasingly prevalent in future.

The development of ecotourism based on strategic planning is a complex multidisciplinary task developed on the principles of the sustainability concept. Clearly defined and pre-established goals can be achieved only with well-conceived environmental management in tourism. The tasks of the tourist destination ecological management are aimed at preserving the living environment of that area, which implies the application of world standards, active involvement in relevant environmental actions, and creating partnerships with other participants in the realization of established goals (Đorđević et al., 2010).

## **2. Ecotourism in Serbia**

Ecotourism in Serbia is still in its infancy and at an unenviable level. The main reasons for this situation are considered to be insufficiently developed ecotourism destinations, as well as the lack of appropriate campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of the concept and principles of ecotourism (Beljanski, 2018). This type of tourism has only recently begun to

be recognized as one of the possible ways to make a profit in both the tourism industry and the entire national economy. Natural and cultural diversity, the richness of biodiversity, areas of untouched nature, conditions for outdoor sports activities, and education of tourists are just some of the potentials that are the basis for ecotourism development. Some of the potential eco-destinations in Serbia are Stara Planina, Đerdap National Park, Krupajsko vrelo, Tara National Park, the nature reserves of Zasavica, Uvac, Stari Begej, Vlasina Lake, Golija - Studenica biosphere reserve, and many others. Currently, the most used forms of ecotourism are ecotourism in protected natural assets and ecotourism of green mountains. However, Serbia still needs to make great efforts to use its natural resources as important factors in the ecotourism offer. In that sense, it is necessary to obtain serious and comprehensive approach of the State, active participation of local government, infrastructure development, training and raising environmental awareness, an international certification of services, continuous monitoring and introduction of extensive and responsible marketing for promotion of ecotourism destinations and environmental programs (Milivojević et al., 2006).

### **3. Methodology**

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis is a tool that is considered the basis of strategic management. This technique aims to define all internal (Strengths, Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities, Threats) factors that affect the organization's positioning in the market (Hill & Westbrook, 1997). In order to generate strategies for achieving the desired goals, based on the results obtained by SWOT analysis, a TOWS matrix can be created. The difference between the SWOT and TOWS matrix is that the former is focused primarily on the internal environment, and the latter on the external one. The process of TOWS analysis implies the merging of external factors, i.e. opportunities and threats with the strengths and weaknesses that represent the internal factors of the project. By establishing the relationship between internal and external factors, i.e. strengths-opportunities weaknesses-opportunities, and then strengths-threats and weaknesses-threats, four types of strategies are formulated (SO, WO, ST, WT):

- “SO” strategies aim to use strengths in order to maximize and exploit potential opportunities. These strategies are also known as attack strategies.
- “WO” strategies need to minimize weaknesses in order to make room for the exploitation of opportunities. This strategy is also known as the “Min-Max” strategy.
- “ST” strategies, i.e. “Max-Min” strategy, are defined in a way that will minimize possible threats by identified strengths. Such strategies are called defensive strategies.
- “WT” strategies are aimed at minimizing weaknesses in order to avoid potential threats, and such strategies are extremely defensive. They are “Min-Min” strategies.

Besides its intensive application in business, SWOT-TOWS analysis has found its application in strategic planning within tourism. In that sense, numerous studies have applied this model to generate ecotourism development strategies as a dynamic sector growing rapidly worldwide (Akbulak & Cengiz, 2014; Asadpourian et al., 2020; Ganjali, 2014; Jozi & Rezaian, 2010; Lane, 1994).

The aim of this paper is to use the abovementioned methods to create an adequate model of strategic planning for the development of ecotourism in Bor and its surroundings.

## **Research area**

Bor City, as the seat of Bor District, is located in the east of the Republic of Serbia. According to the 2018 census, there were 45,266 inhabitants in the city and its surrounding villages ([Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019](#)). The city has a predominantly hilly and mountainous relief and covers an area of 856 km<sup>2</sup>. It is known for significant deposits of copper and gold and it was considered as an industrial city for decades. However, it is less known that there are numerous natural resources in the vicinity of the city, which represent a significant basis for the development of tourism, and ecotourism as well.

Near the city, there is Brestovac banja, in which healing springs ensure medical treatment and rehabilitation to visitors. If other natural potentials are considered, the following can be taken into account: the limestone surface of Dubašnica, the mountains of Crni Vrh, Stol, Deli Jovan, Mali Krš and Veliki Krš, Bor Lake, Zlot Caves, and Lazar's Canyon. Each of these relief areas with its characteristics creates opportunities for the development of ecotourism. In recent years, there has been a growing interest of numerous nature lovers from Serbia in the mountain massifs such as Crni Vrh and Stol. Their potentials are diverse and, therefore, they are suitable for various activities such as hiking, paragliding, skiing, relaxing in nature, and many others related to the concept of ecotourism. Bor Lake is perhaps the most famous tourist destination in the vicinity of Bor, but considering the characteristics of tourist visits to this locality and the wishes of visitors, it can be said that only mass tourism is currently developed there. The location of special importance is Zlot Caves, whose complex includes the Lazar's Canyon, caves, and many hiking trails. In addition to natural resources, Bor has numerous potentials in the form of a rich cultural and historical heritage, which can meet requests of the educational component of ecotourism.

Within the main goal of spatial tourism development in Serbia, the following operational goals are relevant for the planning area Bor Lake - Brestovac banja: the realization of tourist projects in the existing and new destinations along with the completion of year-round offer and intensification of its exploitation; the reservation, protection, and activation of new tourist areas in accordance with the possibilities of state financing and the available amount of natural resources for tourism development; the supporting of existing and introduction of new tourism products (cruises with itineraries on natural, cultural and historical and other motives, water tourism, eco-tourism, etc.) ([Official Gazette, 2010](#)). The local government of Bor also recognized the advantages and opportunities for the development of sustainable, rural, and eco-tourism. Aiming to achieve this, a five-year strategy for tourism development in the area of the city and its surroundings has been defined. The strategy is based on operational plans, i.e. identifying key indicators for measurement of social, economic, and environmental benefits achieved in the foreseeable future. It is planned to create an action plan that will be focused on the establishment of cooperation between local government, public sector, and private sector and citizens, aiming to develop sustainable tourism.

## **4. Results and discussion**

In order to generate the most effective and efficient strategies aimed at the ecotourism development in Bor and its surroundings, the SWOT-TOWS model was applied. The results of this analysis are presented below.

### **4.1. SWOT analysis results**

The application of SWOT analysis in this paper is reflected in the identification of all strengths and weaknesses characterizing the research area and the identification of

opportunities and threats that are relevant for the development of ecotourism. Consequently, based on a comprehensive overview of the current situation, Table 1 highlights all internal and external factors, which in the next step will be the basis for creating and prioritizing strategies for the development of ecotourism in Bor and its surroundings.

Table 1: SWOT matrix

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p><b>S1</b> Areas of untouched nature and favorable conditions for growing organic products</p> <p><b>S2</b> Relief potential for sports and recreational activities</p> <p><b>S3</b> Numerous rural areas</p> <p><b>S4</b> Specific cultural and historical heritage</p> <p><b>S5</b> Local government initiative for rural development and nature conservation</p>	<p><b>W1</b> Low level of ecological awareness of citizens and insufficient knowledge about the concept of ecotourism in this region</p> <p><b>W2</b> Lack of synergy and nonconformity of all stakeholders</p> <p><b>W3</b> Very few accommodation facilities that comply with environmental standards</p> <p><b>W4</b> Poor traffic connection</p> <p><b>W5</b> Insufficiently developed image of Bor District as a potential ecotourism destination</p>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<p><b>O1</b> Numerous EU funds and projects, as a financial incentive for the development of sustainable tourism in Serbia</p> <p><b>O2</b> Trend of increasing tourist interest in ecotourism in Serbia</p> <p><b>O3</b> Implementation of the Tourism Development Strategy of Bor and its surroundings for the period 2021-2025</p> <p><b>O4</b> Announcing the construction of Vožd Karadorđe Highway</p>	<p><b>T1</b> Industrialization and even more intensive development of mining in this region</p> <p><b>T2</b> Overexploitation of natural resources</p> <p><b>T3</b> Insufficient interest of domestic and foreign investors in investing in tourism</p> <p><b>T4</b> Unsuccessful implementation of adopted strategies for the development of ecotourism</p> <p><b>T5</b> Redirection towards the development of more commercial forms of tourism</p>

Source: Author's research

It can be seen from Table 1 that each factor or criterion has a different number of sub-criteria. In that case, strengths have defined five criteria (S1-S5), weaknesses have also five (W1-W5), opportunities have four (O1-O4) and threats have five sub-criteria (T1-T5). A somewhat more detailed explanation of the mentioned matrix factors follows below.

*Areas of untouched nature and favorable conditions for growing organic products (S1)* - The surroundings of Bor abound in wild landscapes (Crni Vrh, Stol, Veliki Krš). Due to the favorable climate and quality agricultural land, the preconditions have been created for the cultivation of organic products, for which the demand has been growing rapidly in recent years. This kind of product is one of the requirements and needs of eco-tourists. Therefore, the mentioned characteristics are the basis of rural development and recovery.

*Relief potential for sports and recreational activities (S2)* - Ecotourism is also characterized by the aspiration of visitors to active vacation. The specifics of the relief in this area provide favorable conditions for sports activities in nature (hiking, cycling, mountaineering, rafting, paragliding, etc.). At the same time, it is necessary to eliminate any danger of disturbing or changing the original character and appearance of the area.

*Numerous rural areas (S3)* - Rural areas represent a suitable ground for the development of agro-eco-tourism, which is increasingly represented in the world. This type of ecotourism is based on the stay of tourists in rural households and their participation in the agricultural

activities of the hosts, as well as familiarizing with the local flora and fauna, culture, customs, and traditions.

*Specific cultural and historical heritage (S4)* - The cultural heritage of predominantly rural areas in the vicinity of Bor and the nearby villages is reflected in the existence of a unique Vlach community with a specific material and spiritual heritage. Historically, as the city with the most famous and oldest copper and gold mine, Bor is known for the Museum of Mining and Metallurgy, numerous monuments dedicated to the founders and mining engineers, and exhibits of mining machinery and equipment exhibited throughout the city.

*Local government initiative for rural development and nature conservation (S5)* - Numerous initiatives and projects implemented by local government and non-governmental organizations aimed at the development of various tourism types based on nature and environmental protection have been present in Bor during past years. These types of initiatives are increasingly involving the young people and residents of rural areas.

Other internal factors are weaknesses and their explanations follow.

*Low level of ecological awareness of citizens and insufficient knowledge about the concept of ecotourism in this region (W1)* - A high level of environmental awareness of the local population is a basic precondition for the establishment and long-term development of ecotourism. Following their example, residents should influence the behavior of visitors and their attitude towards the environment. Their daily activities should be in accordance with environmental rules and requirements. In this region, it is necessary to organize more frequently ecological workshops, realize ecological education, and learn the actual meaning of ecotourism.

*Lack of synergy and nonconformity of all stakeholders (W2)* - In order to achieve development and progress in any area, coherence and joint action of all stakeholders is a necessity. In the case of the ecotourism development in Bor and its surroundings, the situation in that regard is still not satisfactory. The cooperation between local government, urban and rural population, rural households, entrepreneurs, and investors is weak, while their activities are unrelated and inconsistent.

*Very few accommodation facilities comply with environmental standards (W3)* - In order to preserve a certain rural area, i.e. an area of untouched nature, during a short visitors' stay, it is necessary to build such capacities that are in line with environmental standards. Such capacities should have minimal impact on the environment. One type of such facilities is the "eco-lodges", which does not require large investments. However, in this region, as well as in the rest of Serbia, the number of eco-lodges and facilities built in harmony with nature is insignificant.

*Poor traffic connection (W4)* - One of the prominent shortcomings of the Region as a whole is the insufficiently frequent location and isolation of Bor. Poor traffic infrastructure and inadequate connections with other parts of Serbia make the tourists' arrival in this area much more complicated.

*Insufficiently developed image of Bor District as a potential ecotourism destination (W5)* - The long and widely known mining tradition of Bor certainly influenced the creation of its image of an industrial city. The reputation gained in this way undoubtedly hinders the development and promotion of Bor as an ecotourism destination.

Within the SWOT analysis, in addition to internal ones, external factors are also considered, which reflect the opportunities and threats to eco-tourism development.

*Numerous EU funds and projects, as a financial incentive for the development of sustainable tourism in Serbia (O1)* - The financial sources intended for the reconstruction of roads and accommodation capacities, the enhancement of consumption of renewable resources in the households, recycling, environmental protection, etc. are numerous but underutilized. They are reflected in the various EU programs that have emerged to support the development of ecotourism, rural tourism, the protection and improvement of the environment, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

*The trend of increasing tourist interest in ecotourism in Serbia (O2)* - In 2016, the Serbian Government adopted the Tourism Development Strategy for the period 2016-2025, which emphasizes the development of sustainability and ecotourism (Official Gazette, 2016). The strategic approach implemented at the national level significantly contributes to the provision of technical, financial, and promotional support and their integration and facilitates the establishment and operation of small and medium enterprises oriented to ecotourism in all parts of Serbia.

*Implementation of the Tourism Development Strategy of Bor and its surroundings for the period 2021-2025 (O3)* - One of the operational goals defined in the recently adopted Tourism Development Strategy in Bor and its surroundings for the period 2021-2024 is the development of sustainable tourism. Within this goal, measures are planned for the integration of ecotourism and active tourism in the tourist offer of the city of Bor and its surroundings.

*Announcing the construction of the Vožd Karadorđe Highway (O4)* - Vožd Karadorđe Highway, whose construction is planned in near future, implies a fast road that will go in the epsilon branch, from Mladenovac to Arandelovac, from Topola to Rača, Svilajnac, Despotovac, and Bor. This highway would make Bor and its tourist sites “closer” to the other parts of Serbia and make them more accessible not only to domestic but also to foreign tourists.

Finally, potential threats that could jeopardize the development of ecotourism in the observed area are analyzed.

*Industrialization and intensified development of mining in this region (T1)* - From the moment of the sale of the company Mining and Smelting Basin Bor to Zijin Copper, the Chinese company, there has been recorded a rapid industrial development and exploitation of copper and gold ore, as well as the opening of new mines. In addition, the number of smaller mining companies has been increasing. These changes pose a threat in the form of endangering and destroying certain ecosystems. Furthermore, these trends significantly contribute to the creation of the image of an ecologically endangered city.

*Overexploitation of natural resources (T2)* - Non-compliance with environmental standards during the technological processes of production and processing of copper and gold ore in the future may contribute to significant pollution of air, water, and soil, thus eliminating any possibility of ecotourism development in the city. Even more alarming is the fact that irresponsible attitude towards natural resources and neglecting the environment capacity will significantly endanger the local population health.

*The insufficient interest of domestic and foreign investors in investing in tourism (T3)* - Given that ecotourism is a type of tourism that, at first glance, does not bring significant profits, very often there is no interest of investors to finance such projects. On the other hand, ecotourism development does not require significant financial resources. Most of these investments are necessary for traffic infrastructure development and the building of accommodation facilities.

*Unsuccessful implementation of adopted strategies for the development of ecotourism (T4)* - National and local tourism development strategies have not delivered significant results in the past. Besides, a large number of operational objectives have not been achieved yet. According to the Strategy for Tourism Development in the Republic of Serbia in the period from 2016-2025, the main reasons for this failure were the global economic crisis, the unstable political situation in the country, the lack of financial resources, and the incomprehension of the tourism sector importance for economic development. Current strategies emphasize the need for a systematic approach to tourism development, and special emphasis is placed on sustainable tourism and ecotourism. However, the latest events related to the COVID-19 virus pandemic have already started to disrupt tourism development globally. Tourism is one of the most endangered industries and the consequences will be the long-term ones. Therefore, the implementation of all strategies adopted so far is under question.

*Redirection towards the development of more commercial forms of tourism (T5)* - Mass tourism is still one of the tourism types that brings the highest income to the State and the local community. Traditional tourists spend larger sums of money during their stay in a certain tourist destination to satisfy their personal needs for rest and relaxation. Although ecotourism is recognized as an alternative form of tourism that strives to maintain ecological balance, the worrying fact is that competition for profit in underdeveloped countries such as Serbia will further increase the importance of mass tourism.

#### 4.2. Generating strategies using the TOWS matrix

The next step that will enable the generation of strategies depending on the conducted SWOT analysis is the creation of the TOWS matrix.

Based on the abovementioned, the strategies for the development of ecotourism in Bor and the surrounding area are generated and shown in Table 2.

The combination of the observed internal and external factors enabled obtaining the following strategies.

*The strategy of more frequent application of foreign funds and implementation of projects aimed at acceleration of eco-tourism and rural development (SO1)* - In addition to the availability of natural resources, ecotourism development depends on the availability of financial resources. Coordinated and continued monitoring of open calls for ecotourism development, rural areas, and preservation of cultural and historical heritage by local governments, entrepreneurs, and farm owners would increase the chances of obtaining non-refundable financial assistance aimed at building accommodation, infrastructure development, promotion, and the like (Table 2: S1, S3, O1 and O3).

Table 2: TOWS matrix

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	<b>S1</b> Areas of untouched nature and favorable conditions for growing organic products <b>S2</b> Relief potential for sports and recreational activities <b>S3</b> Numerous rural areas <b>S4</b> Specific cultural and historical heritage <b>S5</b> Local government	<b>W1</b> Low level of ecological awareness of citizens and insufficient knowledge about the concept of ecotourism in this region <b>W2</b> Lack of synergy and nonconformity of all stakeholders <b>W3</b> Very few



	initiative for rural development and nature conservation	accommodation facilities that comply with environmental standards <b>W4</b> Poor traffic connection <b>W5</b> Insufficiently developed image of Bor District as a potential ecotourism destination
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p><b>O1</b> Numerous EU funds and projects, as a financial incentive for the development of sustainable tourism in Serbia</p> <p><b>O2</b> Trend of increasing tourist interest in ecotourism in Serbia</p> <p><b>O3</b> Implementation of the Tourism Development Strategy of Bor and its surroundings for the period 2021-2025</p> <p><b>O4</b> Announcing the construction of Vožd Karadorđe Highway</p>	<p><b>SO</b></p> <p><b>SO1</b> Strategy of more frequent application for foreign funds and implementation of projects aimed at acceleration of ecotourism and rural development</p> <p><b>SO2</b> Strategy for creating a unique tourist product based on the integration of natural, recreational, and cultural and historical potentials</p>	<p><b>WO</b></p> <p><b>WO1</b> Strategy for raising the environmental awareness of the local population and familiarization with the concept of ecotourism</p> <p><b>WO2</b> Strategy for intensifying the promotion of natural and cultural and historical potentials</p> <p><b>WO3</b> Strategy for enabling joint action of all stakeholders</p>
<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p><b>T1</b> Industrialization and intensified development of mining in this region</p> <p><b>T2</b> Overexploitation of natural resources</p> <p><b>T3</b> Insufficient interest of domestic and foreign investors in investing in tourism</p> <p><b>T4</b> Unsuccessful implementation of adopted strategies for the development of ecotourism</p> <p><b>T5</b> Redirection towards the development of more commercial forms of tourism</p>	<p><b>ST</b></p> <p><b>ST1</b> Strategy for environmental protection in the Region and increased control of Zijin Company business operations by State institutions, as well as imposing more restrictive measures to prevent pollution</p> <p><b>ST2</b> Strategy for stimulation of rural and agricultural development in the function of tourism</p>	<p><b>WT</b></p> <p><b>WT1</b> Strategy for intensified efforts of local government towards harmonization of activities with the Tourism Development Strategy for the Republic of Serbia in the period 2016-2025</p> <p><b>WT2</b> Strategy for the establishment of ecotourism development fund by local government</p>

Source: Author's research

*Strategy for creating a unique tourist product based on the integration of natural, recreational and cultural and historical potentials (SO2)* - This strategy would integrate the natural, recreational and cultural and historical values of the region, which would satisfy all

the requirements of ecotourists in the form of enjoying natural wealth, active recreation and education (Table 2: S1, S3, S4, O2 and O3).

*Strategy for raising the environmental awareness of the local population and familiarization with the concept of ecotourism (WO1)* - The ecologically aware local population is the basic precondition for the development of ecotourism. Local government and population must be fully acquainted with the requirements of ecotourism and ecotourists, in order to create an adequate offer and set an example to visitors regarding attitudes towards the environment (Table 2: W1 and O3).

*Strategy for intensifying the promotion of natural and cultural and historical potentials (WO2)* - The Strategy for the Tourism Development of the City and its surroundings for the Period 2021-2025 adopted by the local government, among other things, includes the activities for the development and promotion of ecotourism. The implementation of this Strategy would overcome the weaknesses that are reflected in the underdeveloped image of Bor and its surroundings as a potential ecotourism destination.

*Strategy for enabling joint action of all stakeholders (WO3)* - The integration of all stakeholders aimed at ecotourism development will provide synergies necessary for coordinated and easier overcoming of problems. Their connection can be realized by establishing various associations in which all interested parties would be active (local self-government, urban and rural population, entrepreneurs, tourist organization, etc.) (Table 2: O2, O3 and W2).

*Strategy for environmental protection in the Region and increased control of the ZiJin Company business operations by State institutions, as well as imposing more restrictive measures to prevent pollution (ST1)* - The industrial recovery of Bor is followed by the numerous negative consequences reflected in the excessive exploitation and intensive pollution of natural resources which are the basis for the ecotourism development. Intensive control of technological processes and severe penalties in case of environmental degradation by mining companies could prevent further disturbance of the ecological balance (Table 2: S5, T1 and T2).

*Strategy for stimulation of rural and agricultural development in the function of tourism (ST2)* - Incentives aimed at rural and agricultural development represent a good basis for the promotion of ecotourism based on the enjoyment of ecotourists in natural and traditional values, consumption of healthy and organically grown foods, active participation in agricultural activities, learning about the habits of the local population and others (Table 2: S3, S4 and T5).

*Strategy for the intensified efforts of the local government towards harmonization of activities with the Tourism Development Strategy for the Republic of Serbia in the period 2016-2025 (WT1)* - The National Tourism Development Strategy for the period 2016-2025 emphasizes the development of sustainable tourism, as well as all types of tourism based on nature. The activities of the local government in line with the Strategy will also contribute to the realization of the set goals at the local level (Table 2: W2, W3, W5 and T4).

*Strategy for the establishment of ecotourism development fund by the local government (WT2)* - Financial support that would be provided by the local government and intended for persons and companies that want to create their own ecotourism offer, sports associations, environmental organizations, and agricultural farms will significantly facilitate the implementation of all planned activities regarding the ecotourism development (Table 2: W2 and T5).

## 5. Conclusion

Following the global tourism trends, the Republic of Serbia is on its way to develop sustainable tourism, i.e. tourism types based on nature and active vacation. In addition to rural tourism, which has the greatest potential for development, the concept of ecotourism can be successfully implemented by an appropriate strategic approach. Despite the wide availability of natural resources, ecotourism in Serbia is still in its infancy. However, the role of a local government in creating an ecotourism destination is considered even more important than the role of a state in most cases. Its importance is reflected in the definition and consistent implementation of the ecotourism development strategy, investments, and provision of incentives for the involvement of the overall local economy in tourism development. Regions and localities which use their own recourses insufficiently operate with loss and the revenues they generate are minimal and insufficient for stimulating the local economic development. Therefore, joint action and cooperation of all stakeholders are a necessity. Their coordinated activities can meet all the requirements of ecotourists and the main principles on which ecotourism is based. Infrastructural investments in the building of transport network and adequate accommodation capacities, intensive promotion of localities as ecotourism destinations, raising environmental awareness of citizens, and environmental protection are the key issues of crucial importance in the process of ecotourism development.

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