

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS ON MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS—CREATING A THEORETICAL MODEL AND EMPIRICAL TESTING AMONG PROTECTED AREAS, MANAGERS AND MAYORS

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Authorities who manage protected areas (places with unique natural assets) are responsible for nature conservation, sustainable development and the local population's quality of life. Accordingly, they should present innovative ideas for relaxation and recreation with an eye toward protecting nature. This has not yet been accomplished in Slovenia. The qualitative research in this paper is performed to develop a model for authorities who manage protected areas, particularly with regard to the management of stakeholder impacts. Results from two of the four groups of experts interviewed are presented in this paper.

Keywords: *protected area, management authority, stakeholders, marketing*

INTRODUCTION

Slovenia is a small country surrounded by Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. Approximately two million people live in Slovenia's 20.273 km² area; 12% of which is protected and about 80% is managed.

Our research includes all nine protected areas (PAs) under management authority—one national park, three regional parks, four landscape parks, and one natural reserve, which represents about 80% of all PAs in Slovenia; as well as three PAs in the process of establishment without management authority—two landscapes and one regional park. Slovenian PA territory covers about 12% of Slovenia's land mass.ⁱ About two-thirds of the PAs were established by the state, while the remainder



by municipalities. PAs are generally located in rural environments that contain about 2% of all Slovenian inhabitants within their borders.

Principal problems facing Slovenia's PAs include insufficient management of stakeholder impacts, communication and collaboration gaps and a gap between the marketing mix and consumer orientation.

The purposes of our study are to investigate the management of customers' (visitors and locals) impact on PAs along with organizational directives for sustainable development and to investigate Slovenia's PAs as products within a marketing framework given existing consumer behavior. Finally, we create a model for all Slovenian PAs and verify its acceptability to all stakeholders.

First, we examine visitor management models of PAs worldwide to find that Europe tends to retain people in its PAs who create and protect traditional, cultural landscapes. Because of the historical, natural and cultural differences among countries, American models cannot be simply translated to European needs, so we devise our own model, which should consider the protection of nature as well as the country's unique individuals and their traditional lifestyles.

After interviewing four groups of experts—the results of two of these groups are presented in this article—we recognize that Slovenia does not have an effective management model for its PAs. Based on these findings, we develop a new theoretical model for PAs in Slovenia and, as the next step in our research, test the model with PA consumers.

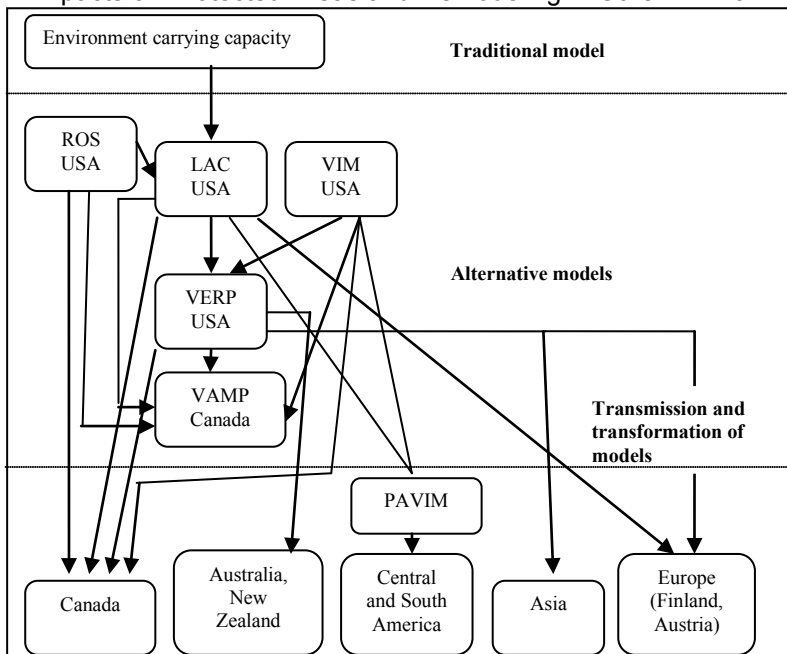
THEORETICAL REVIEW

The protection of areas with unique natural ecosystems and cultural heritages has a long history in both the U.S. and Canada.ⁱⁱ In fact, over the last 20 years, awareness concerning the human impact on nature and natural systems has been growing. Though crowds of people are now visiting PAs (Taylor 2007) to experience the beauty of nature, many visitors are not yet aware of the importance of preserving PAs for future generations.

In the 1970s, authors from the U.S. and Canada began writing about capacity planning and the carrying capacity of PAs (Stankey et al. 1985). Consequently, in the following years, a great many decision-making systems evolved (Figure 1) (Page and Connell 2006; Eagles and McCool 2004; Howie 2003; Farrell and Marion 2002; Stankey et al. 1985). These include: the Limits of Acceptable Change planning system (LAC); Visitor Impact Management Planning (VIM); the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection process (VERP); Visitor Activity Management

Planning (VAMP); and the concept of a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). Many PA managers adopted at least one of these systems (McKay 2006) (South America - Protected Area Visitor Impact Management, PAVIM), with the exception of European managers, who did not follow their lead.

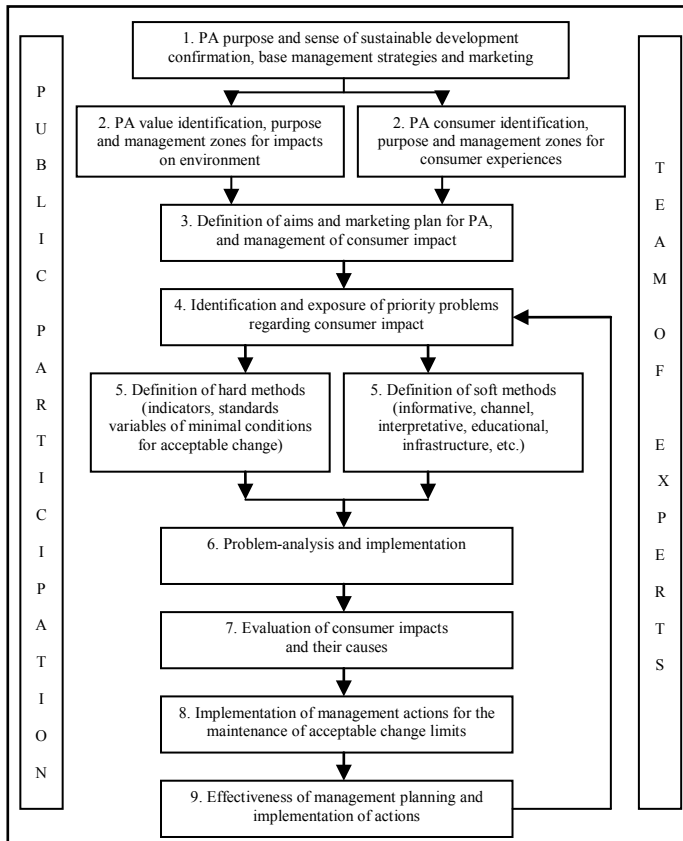
Figure 1. North American Decision-Making Model Development: Visitor Impacts on Protected Areas and Remodeling in Other Environments



Many studies (Erkkonen and Itkonen 2006; Eagles and McCool 2004; Manning 2001; Farrell and Marion 2002; National Parks Service 1997-2007) focus on manager concerns about restricting human access in order to limit negative impacts on nature. However, few studies are done, on the needs and expectations of consumers, whether local residents or visitors. The Tourism Optimization Management Model from Australia (Newsome et al. 2002; Jack and Duka 2007) and the Integrated Planning and Management of Tourism Based on Natural Assets model from New Zealand (Baily et al. 2003; Baily 2007) are two rare examples of visitor-management models that exist outside the U.S. and Canada.

In addition, while many PA management systems consider the recommendations of various organizations for natural protection and sustainable development, only a few treat PAs as products (Beunders 2006) or apply the concepts of product management—e.g., marketing mix and consumer behavior (Shepard 2006, With et al. 2006, Manning 2001) decision processes—to consumer decisions to experience a PA.

Figure 2. Protected Area Stakeholder Impact Management Model



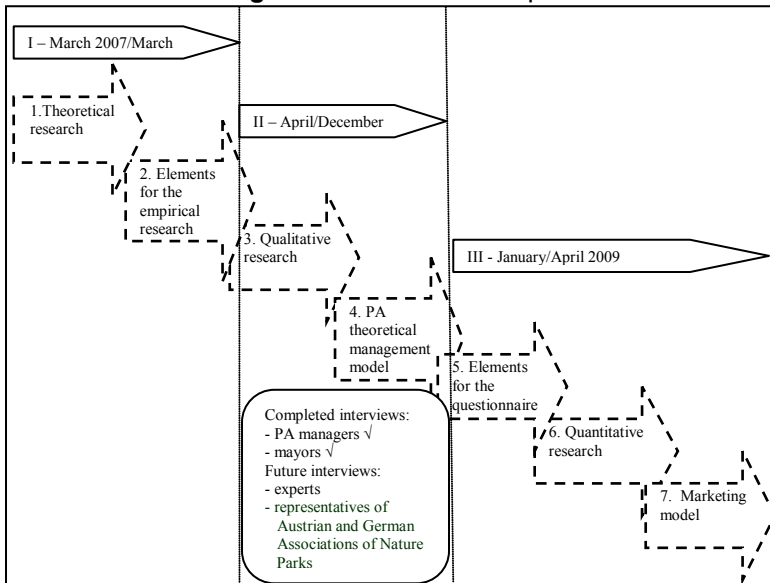
According to our extensive literature review, when the first stakeholder impact management model is created (Figure 2), it is clear that PA managers in Europe do not eliminate people from their PAs in effort to preserve the environment, which is why severe management

actions or prohibitions are not a solution for European PAs. This assumption is the starting point for all other activities in our empirical research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is divided into three phases and seven steps (Figure 3).

Figure 3. 7 Research Steps



The first phase contains: (a) a literature review and research on Slovene PAs and (b) designation of research elements (formation of four interview questionnaires and the first theoretical model). The second phase contains qualitative research, which includes interviews with members of the expert group, which comprises four expert-member sub-groups: PA management representatives (22); local community representatives (mayors) (8); other organization representatives (41); representatives from German and Austrian Associations of Nature Parks (2). The second phase also includes development of the PA management model. The third phase contains: (a) formation of elements for the survey questionnaire; (b) quantitative research consisting of the questionnaire for investigation of PA consumer needs and expectations (an online questionnaire of consumers who visited PAs in the Summer 2008); and

(c) findings for PA management authorities and recommendations for social marketing.

This paper concentrates on the second phase, qualitative research, particularly on the research of the first and second expert sub-groups: 22 PA managers and 15 mayors.

Data collection methodology from PA management representatives

Our first contact with PA management authorities was made by phone and via e-mail in April 2008, when the first primary research of PAs was completed. All PAs were visited in May 2008 to: (a) make personal contact with their management representatives; (b) collect and confirm data about the PAs; and (c) deliver a form for collection of e-mail addresses from visitors to PAs for a future consumer survey. A second visit was made in August and September 2008, when the interviews with the 22 participants from the experts group were completed.

The questions for all personal interviews were prepared in advance and grouped into nine topics: (1) Data and characteristics of PAs; (2) Natural assets, cultural landscape and people in PAs; (3) Management authority and their duties, management plan (MP); (4) Recognizing and setting limits in PAs; (5) Marketing of PAs; (6) PA management communications with stakeholders; (7) PA management cooperation with stakeholders; (8) Management monitoring in the PA and (9) Management effectiveness evaluation. All 22 people interviewed respond satisfactorily to all questions.

Data collection methodology from mayors

Fifteen municipalities were selected based on the number of citizens in the municipality who reside in a PA. The mayors received a questionnaire with nine questions via email: (1) Can you define your view on the PA in your municipality? (2) What is the PA's added value for local people and land owners, as well as for tourism and other offers? (3) How well or poorly do local people accept the PA's management authority? (4) Define the communication between the PA's management authority and the local people and municipality. (5) How do you retain young people and intellectuals in the local environment? (6) Do local people have an opportunity to participate in PA causes that affect their lives and their quality of life? (7) Which activities in your municipality has the PA taken over? (8) Which activities has the municipality taken

over for the PA? (9) Can you define the relationship between the municipality and your PA?

After three requests, we received responses from eight municipalities. Two of the respondents are founders of a PA and the others are within PAs founded by the state. Three of the responders were from municipalities who's PAs are in the process of establishment and do not yet have management authority (For these PAs, representatives of the founders were interviewed. Management duties for other PAs are directed by public institutions). Almost all municipalities are located in the countryside. Responses are heterogeneous and reflect the vast professional knowledge of nature protection, communication skills, political willingness and typical human qualities of the mayors.

RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ANSWERS

Results from PA management representatives

1. Personal data and characteristics of PAs. PAs are established to protect a region's natural assets, biological diversity and landscape variety; to ensure economic and social development and research work; to prevent construction and inappropriate influences in the natural environment; and to assist in cross-border cooperation. PAs in IUCN's Category V with a management tradition have from eight to 20 employees and cover from four to 462 km² with 0 to 23,000 human inhabitants. They suffer financial and professional shortages, do not know each others' work very well and are not connected.

2. Natural assets, cultural landscape and people in PAs. Slovenia is a mosaic of natural assets that are protected as individual natural assets and narrow (natural monuments, reserves) or wide (national, regional or landscape parks). PA landscapes range from salina landscape and wetlands on the sea to karst landscapes, dried-up lakes and caves in the Dinaric region; from high mountains and valleys with rivers, lakes and forests in the Alps, to vineyard hills, fruit gardens, grasslands and mosaics of fields in the Pannonian lowland in the east of Slovenia.

Up until a few years after the Second World War, the majority of people in Slovenia lived in the countryside and were farmers who largely satisfied their own consumption needs. However, the current situation of the local people in PAs is the opposite: individuals tend to be older, with low levels of education. Given present day conditions, which are characterized by many immigrants, high unemployment and low population density, bad traffic and poor access to public services, many of

those who stay have jobs outside the area. Old habits and traditional crafts have largely been forgotten, and people are tired from working in town and do not socialize much, so active associations with the area's PAs are rare. Today's farms are small and often do not produce enough sustenance for a quality life. Additionally, local people often do not recognize opportunities and entrepreneurial initiative are rare. Tourists who come typically stay for only one day, although in some areas, foreigners and urban citizens buy old farms and renovate them into holiday cottages. Like all new inhabitants, these individuals bring with them new habits, needs and expectations.

3. Management authority and their duties, management plan.

PAs are organized as public institutions or concessionaires (firms or associations). Public institutions are state-financed for employees and primary activities, while concessionaires must develop their own financial resources. Both kinds of organizations undertake various projects and apply for EU sources to finance their activities for nature protection and other purposes. All PAs have financial and professional employment problems.

Only two of the PA managers we interviewed have a confirmed management plan, although many others are in the process of writing one. Since these PA managers do not have systematic, defined activities, they have problems with implementation. Additionally, PAs are financed according to the Law for Protection of Nature, so management is not expected to perform activities for which they are not qualified or paid (e.g., marketing).

4. Recognizing and setting limits in Pas. Slovenian PAs are established under the Law for Protection of Nature and the Establishment Act, where protection zones, protection regimes and rules of behavior are defined. PA managers must adhere to stated limitations, yet other limitation needs are not defined to prohibit or redirect visitors to less sensitive (less endangered) areas.

5. PA marketing. There are no marketing sections or departments in the management of PAs, and they rarely cooperate with travel agencies or other tourist organizations. Tourist strategies in the PAs are not well developed nor do PA managers position their PAs or segment target consumers, and they know very little about marketing mix. No products for target customers are evident and PA brands are not trademarked because they are not marketed. The best-known target group for Pas is school groups because many invite them for workshops. Activities and infrastructure for disabled people are rare and the park infrastructure is not systematically or holistically planned. Communication tools (Web

sites, brochures and flyers) and activities at Slovene PS are below average. Managers do not look for connections with tour operators to sell services or create local traffic.

6. PA management communications with stakeholders.

Communication with stakeholders within and around PAs exists, in most cases, only formally and contains little in the way of public participation. On one hand, stakeholders do not show initiative while, on the other, the managers rarely have well-developed communication skills. PA managers are obliged to present the Foundation Act of a PA in public presentations and proceedings, which is, in many cases, the only communication these individuals have with local people.

Good examples are found in the region's newer and smaller PAs, where local people participate in the everyday life of the PA and are in continuing contact with the management authority. This occurs because, in the process of establishment, these PAs use numerous innovative tools to communicate with people.

7. PA management's cooperation with stakeholders.

The cooperation of PA management with stakeholders is not well established, although there are some notable exceptions where craftsmen and other local producers take part in the activities of the PA. Unfortunately, PAs do not have an overall strategy for tourism development or a long-term vision for including local offers in PA activities.

8. Monitoring in PAs. Nature monitoring is well covered in Slovene PAs. Unfortunately, PAs do not carry out other sorts of monitoring and do not know their consumers or the expectations and needs of local people and visitors, or local socio-cultural trends. Likewise, they do not develop strategies for a complete approach to monitoring.

9. Evaluation of PA management effectiveness. PAs have not yet developed strategies for evaluating management effectiveness.

Results from mayors

1. Can you define your view of the PA in your municipality? The mayors in those municipalities where PAs have a long tradition and professional skills as well as those wherein the process of establishment is ongoing are positive about the protection of nature. They see living in the PA as a privilege because it is a guarantee of better environmental conditions, social life and quality of life. PAs protect resident and landowner interests, prevent environment degradation and undertake a systematic approach for sustainable economic development. The mayors also believe that protection regimes are too strict and inhibit development

(infrastructure) in the municipalities. Some say that the state protects only nature and forgets the people who live in PAs. The mayors expect more help from the state.

2. What is the added value of the PA for local people and landowners and for tourism and other offers? A small number of residents and service providers think that the protection of nature (PAs) contributes to added value in the region. Most think that they are deprived and limited in construction, mobility and free use of their property. They also do not share the same vision.

3. How well or poorly do local people accept the management authority of the PA? Local people accept PAs with mixed feelings. Landowners are inclined to see the protection only as a limitation of their rights, while other locals are passive. Mayors are not satisfied with the present kind of protection; they would prefer to protect nature under less-severe restrictions. Local people in PAs that are in the process of establishment are interested in the future of the area and are sensitive to environmental problems, but they also have great expectations from their PA's management.

4. Define the communication between the PA management authority, the local people and the municipality. There is formal communication between the PAs and local residents and municipalities. PA management is active in different fields, for example, with nature and cultural heritage conservation, organization of cultural entertainment activities, children and adult awareness about protection, etc. Communication in municipalities with established the PAs is especially good. In most municipalities, PA management and the local residents maintain permanent communication through frequent meetings, but these communications do not result in development of tourism projects or seek to address the need to retain people in the area.

5. How do you retain young people and intellectuals in the local environment? Mayors agree that the structure for local people is not favorable and that the municipalities around PAs do not offer basic living conditions for young people. Municipalities work toward developing conditions for new jobs and infrastructures for local people in urban environments, but are not all successful.

Some municipalities notice a reduction in the numbers of people leaving their PAs—young families remain in the area and intellectuals drive to work in other towns—and they believe this is due to improved living conditions. In some municipalities, foreigners and citizens are buying old farms and rebuilding them into holiday cottages. Local residents are then in the minority and a sense of space, local identity, and

respect for the particularity of the area is lost. Additionally, as people give up farming, the cultural landscape can change.

6. Do the local people have an opportunity to participate in PA causes that affect their lives and their quality of life? PAs regulations define the conditions for sustainable economic development that the local people must observe. Local people in small and distant PAs can participate in public presentations and are often in contact with PA management representatives. Local people in larger municipalities participate by signing off on some decrees (e.g., a detailed municipality spatial plan), while those in smaller or more distant PAs participate through their representatives on PA Institution Councils. On the other hand, local residents rarely show the initiative to participate with PAs if they are not directly involved in a particular matter. The municipalities inform and connect local people and support tourism and other associations, but positive effects are rare.

7. Which activities in your municipality has the PA taken over? Duties that PA managers have taken over for municipalities differ from one PA to another. There is a lack of marketing and management knowledge among PA managers and a continuing communication gap between users and PA management.

8. Which activities has your municipality taken over for the PA? Municipalities, as the founders of PAs, have, with the purpose of protecting the most threatened parts of the municipality, transmitted nature protection duties to PA authorities. Other municipalities help manage PAs with administrative procedures, offer advice for spatial planning, etc. Nonetheless numerous unexplored possibilities for collaboration remain.

9. Can you define the relationship between the municipality and your PA? Relationships between municipalities and PAs are generally good. Both are committed to the protection of most natural assets and the protection of a small part of municipality land (the PA) should not have a negative impact on the further economic and social development of the whole municipality. However, municipalities believe that, except for legislated restrictions, the state does not do anything to help improve PAs but rather place a good deal of responsibility on municipalities without financial support.

There is a need for more communication. Some municipalities and management authorities try to take their common responsibility for long-term solutions, development and better quality of life for the local people seriously while helping to ensure a sensible and environmentally friendly future.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Discussion of PA management representative results

PA managers should communicate and cooperate with other stakeholders in the region and need to be strong partners in sustainable regional development (Alexander 2008; Eagles and McCool 2004; Phillips 2002). They could establish a Union of Slovene PAs, which should work in common interest and aid communication and connection of the PAs and employees working there. The qualified experts network individuals could help by project and research work, preparation of guidelines, workshops, publications, common products, etc. The union could also take care of promotion and presentation for all PAs, which could help the PAs save money and receive help from the experts.

The Slovene government needs to assign more money to the infrastructure investments in the countryside. High quality standards of living could attract young and well-educated people and stimulate them to work in the region or even open their own enterprises there. Thus, local residents could stay at home, work in the region and have the time to communicate with other people. Destination management companiesⁱⁱⁱ (DMCs) should be established to design and market tourism products and assist PAs with promotion and communication with visitors and residents. PAs and DMCs should prepare workshops^{iv} for residents and stimulate local hand craft and small trade, to encourage the promotion of old customs, dances and other traditional crafts.

The government sector for PAs should stimulate PAs by preparing PA management plans with good guidelines and practical workshops as well as care for their confirmation. Within the plans, managers should define the purpose and sense of the area and create 5-10 year development plans and activities for their implementation. With government confirmation of the plans, appropriate financial sources should come to the PAs. These plans should be incorporated in all other documents in the region (Alexander 2008; Philips 2002). For the promotion of PAs and their surroundings (and visitor programs), a marketing department should be introduced or the DMC should be established to take care of marketing. Thus, the PAs could become funds for the activities that are not covered by the government.

PAs should prepare their own management plans and incorporate nature management, infrastructure management, visitor management, crises management, etc., set indicators, monitor them, prepare management actions to keep acceptable conditions and evaluate

management effectiveness (Alexander 2008). Tourism could be the best solution for PAs, if their innovative experience programs are well prepared, guided, zoned, implemented and evaluated (Eagles and McCool 2004).

It is important to point out that marketing of PAs is a critical issue. PAs and their surroundings have to develop marketing strategies and take actions to segment target consumers, positioning the PAs and implementing an effective marketing mix. They could develop brands for PAs, systematically and holistically plan the infrastructure and activities for particular target groups while remaining aware of special demographic groups such as the disabled (Eagle and McCool 2004). They should prepare innovative and interactive communication tools (e.g., Web sites) and connect themselves with tour operators and other stakeholders to improve communication with potential consumers. A union of PAs could represent all Slovene PAs (with promotional materials, Web sites, etc.) and prepare tourism products for three or more PAs for specific target groups.

PAs' communication with stakeholders is also problematic (Phillips 2002). PA managers should learn to use innovative communication tools (workshops, panels, meetings, etc.) to communicate with local residents, tourism enterprises and local authorities. The PA authorities should motivate stakeholders to participate in PA management plans and activities.

PA management should also cooperate with stakeholders more regularly. PAs and their surroundings must develop holistic tourism strategies or a long-term vision for including local offices and service providers in PA activities (Jack and Duka 2007). PA managers must develop, implement, monitor and evaluate an effective tourism management plan and a plan for communicating with the stakeholder network together with stakeholders.

Local residents should be qualified and concession contracts should be signed. Together, PAs and residents need to design holistic programs for visitors of PAs, develop DMCs to promote, cooperate and implement programs to monitor and evaluate the implementation.

PAs should also develop a holistic monitoring plan (Alexander 2008), which incorporates nature, sustainable development in the area, the needs and expectations of residents and other stakeholders and their socio-cultural trends, visitor expectations, visitor impact management, sustainable tourism infrastructure, etc. Indicators should be set and monitored. When acceptable limits are exceeded, management actions

should be undertaken. Monitoring plans should result in the evaluation of PA management effectiveness.

PA unions or the PAs themselves should develop strategies and management models for evaluating management effectiveness (Phillips 2002). RAPPAM methodology could be used as the starting point.

Discussion of mayor answers

Area mayors should develop a sustainable development vision as well as holistic tourism strategies for their regions while stimulating communication among different stakeholders and public interest groups within the process. It is also important to design a friendly and comfortable environment for work and everyday life. Local authorities should stimulate residents to take part in society activities and reintroduce traditional lifestyle ways. Government authorities for PAs should communicate with the local residents and landowners while enabling them to participate in the development of protection regimes in the PAs. Some measures and co-financed programs should be undertaken to preserve residents' standards of living; in hilly or mountainous areas, the agriculture is not competitive and farmers need other activities in order to be financially independent.

Implementation of a holistic sustainable development strategy, a management plan for PAs, a tourism strategy, a stakeholders network plan and other important documents may demonstrate added value for residents in the form of new employment opportunities, subsidies, marketing of natural and cultural places and products and entrepreneurial opportunities; lively business with real properties; better quality of life and a trademark that attracts visitors; sustainable agriculture and tourism development stimulation that offers local people new development opportunities; protected land against negative impacts of tourism, treatment rules and supervision of visitor behaviors; less vandalism; and additional financial resources for development. However, doing so could also create ongoing conflicts of interest among agriculture, forestry and PAs.

Nonetheless, PA authorities should also develop communication and trust among local residents already in the process of establishing the PA (Mikuš 2006; Lucas 2002). Residents will more readily accept a PA if they are interested and connected with the activities in the area. That is why they work in the PAs (employees of PA authorities, concessionaires, volunteers), and everyday contact with PA management is important to continued commitment from these individuals.

PAs should be included in the development of regional sustainable development strategies as well as tourism strategies and should establish stakeholder networks. Regarding all of these activities, PAs should develop communication and collaboration strategies for residents and other stakeholders. They should plan and develop communication tools for unique target groups and based on different occasions while implementing, monitoring and evaluating actions for better conditions in the area.

Retaining young people and intellectuals in the local environment is an increasingly important issue. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a long-term sustainable development strategy for the PAs, along with a strong regard for natural protection (i.e., sustainable economic activities, necessary employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, contents of each specific place and programs, granting concessions for PA activities). Municipalities must work toward developing conditions for new jobs and infrastructures for local people and the socialization of residents (tourism societies, choirs, folklore dances and lifelong learning programs). State and municipalities should stimulate young farmers and craftsmen to stay and care for the cultural landscape as well.

Regarding the quality of life of local residents, PAs should develop participation strategies and plans while setting indicators, implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities for successful participation management. Residents and tourists will participate when they are directly involved and interested in participation. Managers should learn to use communication tools while gaining knowledge of how to motivate residents to work in PAs (guides, interpreters, voluntary nature protection supervisors or rangers).

However, PA managers are required to perform numerous activities, e.g., PA managers facilitate local awareness about the meaning of nature protection at meetings, education and training courses, and schools; conduct qualifying exercises (for guides, voluntary nature protection supervisors, etc.) and professional excursions for local people; collaborate in tourist promotions with associations and schools; organize entertainment activities; manage real properties and sustain pastures, arrange footpaths and educational and interpretative theme paths. For permanent and successful performance of all these activities, PAs must develop a local community activities strategy and while qualifying for these kinds of activities. Likewise, it is also very important to develop an effective marketing strategy and qualify for activities of the marketing mix.

On the other hand, municipalities have also taken over some activities for PAs, e.g., the municipalities have to plan and develop sustainable development strategies and include the activities for and with the PAs in their territories. For a holistic approach, it is important to cooperate and communicate with Pas' management authorities by developing communication, participation and cooperation strategies as well as holistic tourism strategies for the areas.

When discussing the relationship between municipalities and Pas, it is important to note that Slovene sectorial legislation regulations are the largest obstacle. State and local sectors are not used to communicating and cooperating with each other. The same problem occurs in relationships between municipalities and PAs. In both cases, all parties must try harder to establish a solid relationship with residents and stakeholders, which could be more successful if they represent and implement activities together. For these purposes, PAs need to develop cooperation strategies, set indicators and implement them as well as ensure effective monitoring and evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

This research reveals three main problems related to the management of PAs in Slovenia: (1) shortcuts in finances and employees; (2) problems in communication and cooperation with stakeholders; and (3) a dearth of marketing activities. The Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning finances only activities geared to the protection of nature; financial sources for all other projects must be gathered through EU projects. Additionally, marketing activities and consumer behaviors have not yet been investigated, but the communication and cooperation of PA managers with stakeholders in the area is underdeveloped. Local people mainly consider PAs to be obstacles, while municipalities and PAs do not have long-term development and communication strategies.

There is also a need for a regulated political environment and reorganization of the Sector for PAs at the state and local levels, as well as for collaboration with professional employees and financial sources in order to advise PAs and help them in the sociological field.

Managers of PAs are short on finances and employees and do not evaluate stakeholder impacts on PAs, assuming that no restrictions are necessary because there is not yet any overcrowding. They also fail to evaluate conditions for sustainable development (except for evaluations of nature) and issues related to marketing. PA management urgently needs

reorganization, more resources for communication and cooperation with stakeholders.

The added value of managed PAs are areas tied to sustainable development, better awareness of nature protection, new jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, better quality of life for local residents and an innovative local offer for tourists to experience natural relaxation and recreation with the awareness of nature's protection and a sense of belonging.

PAs also must reconcile tourist strategies with the local community goals and develop marketing plans to invigorate awareness of PAs by Slovenians as well as those abroad. To develop complete strategies in areas of sustainable development, cooperation with municipalities and regional development agencies is essential. Protection of the PA must be undertaken by the local population when they feel protection and all life conditions in the area have been considered with state-supported, suitable legislation and implementation. This approach could lead to better cooperation with other stakeholders in the region such that, over time, they will notice not simply the limitations imposed by PAs, but also their added value. For their part, potential visitors will recognize a PA as a valuable tourism product.

PA managers need marketing knowledge or at least, cooperation with DMCs in public/private ownership in order to develop PAs as "products" for target visitor groups. They should establish PA unions, which could develop a communications toolbox for all possible levels (local, regional and national, sectorial, intersectorial and inter-political). PAs should stimulate connections between all stakeholders in the area to develop an effective marketing proposition and to promote the area.

In order to ensure effective PA management, managers should undertake holistic monitoring that includes natural, economic, and socio-cultural observation while encouraging residents and visitors to behave in accordance with all regulations.

Research shows that representatives of PA management authorities and mayors of PA municipalities are not satisfied with existing legislation related to PAs or with PA management operations. Standardized PA management systems and management plans are necessary for effective functioning of Slovene PAs and for increased awareness of PAs among Slovenians as well as neighboring countries. Likewise, PA managers must respect consumer expectations and needs, creating tailor-made products and communication methods with target consumers to ensure satisfaction of all stakeholders.

In the next phase, interviews with the next two subgroups will refine the model with the description of each step and conditions; this effort will be the basis for our quantitative research.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Data from the European Environmental Agency for 2004 shows that PAs comprise 36.4% of Austria's land area, 10.8% of Italy's, 8.0% of Hungary's, and 20% of Germany's. In the 42 European states as a whole, 14.6% of the land area is protected.

ⁱⁱ IUCN (1994) developed a definition of PAs and a system of six management categories of PAs (Phillips, 2002). Definition of a protected area: "An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and associated cultural resources and managed through legal or other effective means" (IUCN 1994).

ⁱⁱⁱ This is written in the Slovene strategy for tourism 2007-2011.

^{iv} Traditional food cooking courses; traditional sweets baking courses; traditional herbs course; bread baking in a traditional way; producing traditional cheese (Gronau and Kaufmann 2009, 90), producing the pumpkin-seed oil, producing marmalades, etc.

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