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Sustainable Tourism in Protected Area—A Case of Fruška Gora National Park, Vojvodina (Northern Serbia)

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Abstract: Sustainable development can be an element of tourism success if its principles are included in the process of strategic tourism development planning, and if such a concept is one of the strategic development goals. The paper analyzes the impact of the perception of the local population and visitors and their satisfaction with the development of tourism in the protected mountain area of Fruška Gora National Park, which has an abundance of natural, cultural, and social tourism resources that are directly included in the tourism offer. Maintaining natural and social values within this sensitive tourist destination, eliminating negative effects of tourism, strengthening the role of residents and visitors in tourism planning and development, and initiating special and other forms of tourism should be the basis of tourism development in this preserved area. The purpose of the research was to obtain important results on the residents' attitudes and visitors' satisfaction with the state of sustainable tourism within this national park, using quantitative methodology and an SPSS analysis of the conducted questionnaire. The respondents' attitudes referred to environmental, economic, sociocultural, and institutional sustainability as being significant foundations of sustainable tourism development. The results revealed not only that tourism in Fruška Gora National Park was partially sustainable, but also that there was a need to improve all dimensions of sustainability. Such results could be used to transform tourism development strategies by emphasizing the growth of sustainable forms of tourism activities. The construction of tourist facilities and infrastructures must be based on environmental protection and residents must be directly involved in tourism development planning.

Keywords: Fruška Gora National Park; sustainable tourism development; residents' perception; visitors' satisfaction; Vojvodina province

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1. Introduction

This research is based on the characteristics of the protected area in Fruška Gora National Park and the satisfaction of visitors and the population with its sustainable tourism development. Such development is a model of planning different tourism forms that must meet certain conditions concerning positive environmental impacts [1,2]. The most significant impacts of sustainable tourism are environmental, sociocultural, and economic ones [3]. Tourism development in protected mountain regions includes a set of planned activities and measures to preserve these sensitive areas with the primary objective to improve the natural, sustainable, and social elements of these vulnerable tourism destinations [4–6]. Another significant objective of sustainable tourism is to satisfy visitors and residents by channeling tourism revenues into management protection models within the protected area [7,8]. The development of tourism within preserved areas most often influences the protection of rare flora and fauna [9], and the use of mountain areas for sports facilities. It also includes carrying capacity, zoning, the role of residents in tourism development,

sociocultural impacts, tourism contributions to the local economy [10], control of the development of receptive facilities for accommodation and food for tourists, etc. [4,11–17]. Achieving an appropriate balance in the protection and improvement of resources and harmonizing the requirements of all stakeholders is a prerequisite for the development of tourism [18]. Sustainability is a fundamental principle of human, and other, resource management strategies worldwide [19]. The objective of this research was to obtain notable results on the residents' attitudes and visitors' satisfaction with the state of sustainable tourism within this national park, using quantitative methodology and an SPSS analysis of the conducted questionnaire. Respondents' attitudes refer to the tourism impact on environmental, economic, sociocultural, and institutional sustainability as significant foundations of sustainable tourism development. The research in this paper aims at obtaining significant results related to the state of sustainable tourism development in Fruška Gora National Park (Serbia) using quantitative methodology. The attributes of the national park and its resources are observed through visitor and resident enjoyment.

The authors plan to use the results of this paper in their future research on individual factors and dimensions of sustainability in order to influence less-represented factors that affect sustainable tourism. These could contribute to improving the overall sustainability of this protected area. Additionally, the survey results could help the authors research sustainable tourism in other protected areas, which can be significant tourist destinations. Extremely important is that the results achieved in this work can provide valuable guidelines on how to protect nature with the help of tourism, how to improve all its values, and how to involve residents in the sustainable development of protected areas. The role of the residents is crucial in such areas. Eventually, a significant contribution of this research is the provision of important information to managers of protected areas on how to plan and organize the development of tourism so that tourism potentials and factors are sustainable.

2. Literature Review

The importance of the sustainable development of protected areas is undeniable. Monitoring the sustainable development of tourism in protected areas is of great significance in many aspects of management processes [12]. The aim of these studies is to find adequate management models for these protected areas, firstly, to preserve nature and all its elements and, secondly, to enable residents to benefit from tourism without negative impacts on the environment [13]. The areas where visitors actively participate in sustainable activities to preserve ecosystems and social values represent significant tourist destinations. Such systems contribute benefits to nature, residents, and visitors. That is precisely the basic postulate of sustainable tourism development. The ecological dimension of tourism progress implies the elimination of negative impacts of tourism on space and the improvement of existing natural factors in mountain destinations [20–22]. Economic sustainability refers to economic benefits for residents, local economies, and entire regions [23]. Significant economic benefits include the employment of the population, income from tourist consumption and sale of tickets, local products, and services [24,25]. Sociocultural sustainability is achieved through the positive effects of tourism on the attitudes and satisfaction of the local population [19], as well as the tourists with tourism development and their mutual and positive interactions [26–28]. The stability of the previously mentioned three dimensions of sustainable tourism development can be achieved through the direct inclusion of local culture and cultural heritage into tourist offers [29], strengthening social ties between visitors and residents, and respecting the initiatives, suggestions, and ideas of residents and visitors towards improving tourism and protecting mountain ranges [30,31]. Cottrell et al. [26] and Asmelash and Kumar [27] pointed out that the function of protected areas in sustainable tourism development can be explored by examining four dimensions of sustainability, the environmental, economic, sociocultural, and institutional. Researching the four dimensions of sustainability in tourism has helped managers, residents, and visitors to see the good and bad sides of tourism development in detail. It allows for a significantly easier examination of individual elements of sustainability. Research and surveys of the perception of

residents and the satisfaction of visitors, such as those conducted by Cottrell et al. [26] and Asmelash and Kumar [27], make it easier for managers to influence the improvement of tourism development factors within protected areas. In examining the impact of tourism on sustainable development in protected areas as sensitive tourist destinations with natural and cultural heritage, it is essential to explore the attitudes and satisfaction of visitors and residents [31,32] with the sustainability of tourism destinations [12,17,31,33–38]. The mentioned models were used in the research of sustainable tourism in the Fruška Gora National Park, examining the four dimensions of sustainability: ecological, economic, institutional, and sociocultural.

This could be examined by measuring the perceived residents' [39] and visitors' attitudes and satisfaction with the four dimensions of sustainable tourism development [38,40]. Their responses can point out the role that this protected mountain area plays in the development of ecological [41], economic, sociocultural, and institutional sustainability [42,43]. Under the influence of all social activities and tourism, the environment changes and modifies, adapting to basic human needs, including tourist ones [39]. Among other internal and external influences of different factors [44], every negative environmental change is indicated as a degradation of the environment [45]. This is also the main reason for constituting a model of protection over this area [46]. These results can be used to formulate strategies and carry out future research on the importance of tourism development in the Fruška Gora National Park [47,48].

3. Research Area

The current position of the Fruška Gora mountain occupies the coordinates 45°04′ to 45°16′ north latitude and 16°37′ to 18°01′ east longitude. It stretches in the west–east direction, with a length of approximately 80 km [49]. The highest peak in the national park is Crveni Čot (539 m). The area of this extensive mountain mass is approximately 500 km^2. It was declared the oldest national park in Serbia on 23 December 1960. This rare and exceptional protected area is located on the southern edge of the Pannonian Plain, along the right bank of the Danube River in Vojvodina (Northern Serbia). Today, after changes considering spatial coverage, the area of this national park is 26,672 ha [50], which is approximately 26.25% of the total territory of the Fruška Gora mountain. The national park was established to protect the natural beauty, flora and fauna, and rich cultural and historical values [49], and it is a tourist destination of predominantly domestic tourism.

The Fruška Gora National Park and the mountainous area include the city of Novi Sad and the territories of smaller towns and settlements, such as Sremski Karlovci, Beočin, Bačka Palanka, Šid, Sremska Mitrovica, Irig, and Inđija [50]. Its excellent geographical position with good infrastructure is strengthened by the vicinity of the two largest cities in Serbia, Belgrade and Novi Sad, which also represent the most significant emitting tourist zones. In addition, this area is located on one of the principal traffic and tourism corridors (Pan–European Corridor 10), making it accessible to many foreign tourists [25] from all major cities in the region and Europe. The research area can be seen in Figure 1.

Studies of the sustainable development of tourism in this destination are helped by examining residents' perceptions and visitors' satisfaction with sustainable tourism. They are significant for nature protection and tourism planning. The territory of this national park is visited annually by approximately 30,000 visitors (before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic). During the COVID-19 pandemic in the research period, the number of tourists significantly decreased. In some periods, those visits were reduced to a minimum depending on the amplitude of the rise and fall of people suffering from COVID-19.

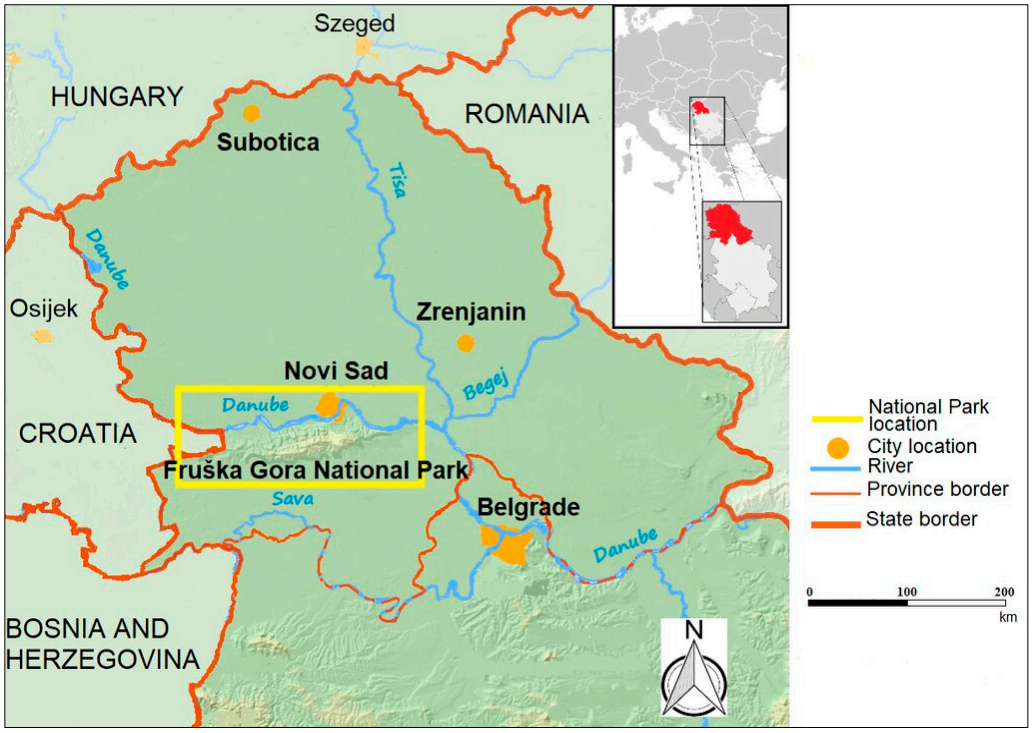

Figure 1. Study area located. Source: author digitalized.

The forms of tourism present in this destination are trips, eco-tourism, bird-watching, tracking, fishing, hunting, educational tourism, sports tourism, etc. The reasons why this area is protected as a national park are:

- For the protection of endangered flora and fauna from anthropogenic and natural influences;
- For the prevention of environmental pollution with solid and liquid waste and wastewater;
- For the prevention of unscrupulous behavior of space users;
- For the suppression of unplanned construction;
- For the prevention of unauthorized and unsustainable use of resources;
- Bad tourism and other reasons for improper and prohibited use [49,50].

The national park receives protection of international importance, because:

- The bird and biodiversity areas (IBAs–IBA) cover 49,210 ha;
- Important plant areas (IPAs) in the Fruška Gora and Special Nature Reserve Koviljko-Petrovaradinski rit cover 142,376 ha;
- Prime butterfly areas (PBAs) in Europe extend over 34,771 ha since 2009;
- The EMERALD area extends over 25,393 ha;
- It is a member of the "Parks Dinarides" network and is a potential NATURA 2000 area.

In 2015, there was an initiative to establish protection for a part of Fruška Gora—Loessland Geopark. According to the classification of the International Organization for Nature Conservation (IUCN), the Fruška Gora National Park belongs to the second category of protection [49]. This would mean that it is a relatively large area, which contains representative examples of the main natural regions, phenomena, and landscapes, where plant and animal species, geomorphological landmarks, and habitats have predominant scientific, educational, and recreational importance [51].

4. Methodology

In the study of sustainable tourism in the Fruška Gora National Park, research models were used by Cottrell et al. [26] and Asmelash and Kumar [27] to measure the perception and satisfaction with sustainable tourism development through the use of the four dimen-

sions of sustainability. The validity of the questionnaire was measured with the help of Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The questions in the survey were related to the perception of residents and visitors regarding the level of institutional, environmental, economic, and sociocultural sustainability in the Fruška Gora National Park, i.e., to what extent these dimensions of sustainability affected the satisfaction level of residents and visitors with sustainable tourism. In this empirical research, data were collected, processed, and presented using the quantitative method. The applied technique was the survey of respondents through random sampling, which provided the highest certainty from the aspect of representativeness. Interviewers used the same questionnaire when they surveyed both residents and visitors.

The statistical methods used in the analysis of data obtained with the help of SPSS v. 21 software (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA) are descriptive statistics and a regression analysis, measuring values with the help of Cronbach's alpha. The first part of the questionnaire covered visitors' sociodemographic characteristics: gender, age, and degree of education.

The second part consisted of 17 statements grouped into four dimensions of sustainability and four statements related to satisfaction with sustainable tourism development [31]. The statements in the questionnaire are an integral part of Tables 1 and 2. Respondents expressed their views using a five-point Likert scale, with one meaning absolute disagreement and five meaning absolute agreement, while a score of three represented a neutral position [31,52–56]. We applied quantitative methodology with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS v. 21). Cronbach's alpha analysis was used to test the reliability of the samples [57] and to measure all four dimensions of sustainability and residents' and visitors' satisfaction with the sustainable tourism development [28,31,38,58]. We implemented the comparative method of the observed results for both groups of respondents. Finally, with the help of a regression analysis, we examined the level of residents' and visitors' satisfaction with the dimensions of sustainability [26,59]. The value of individual dimensions of sustainability could be determined by measuring the perceived attitudes and satisfaction of residents and visitors with the state of sustainability in this protected area. The values of individual dimensions of sustainability directly indicated the level of sustainable tourism development in the Fruška Gora National Park. The research model, which represents a sampling design, can be seen in Figure 2.

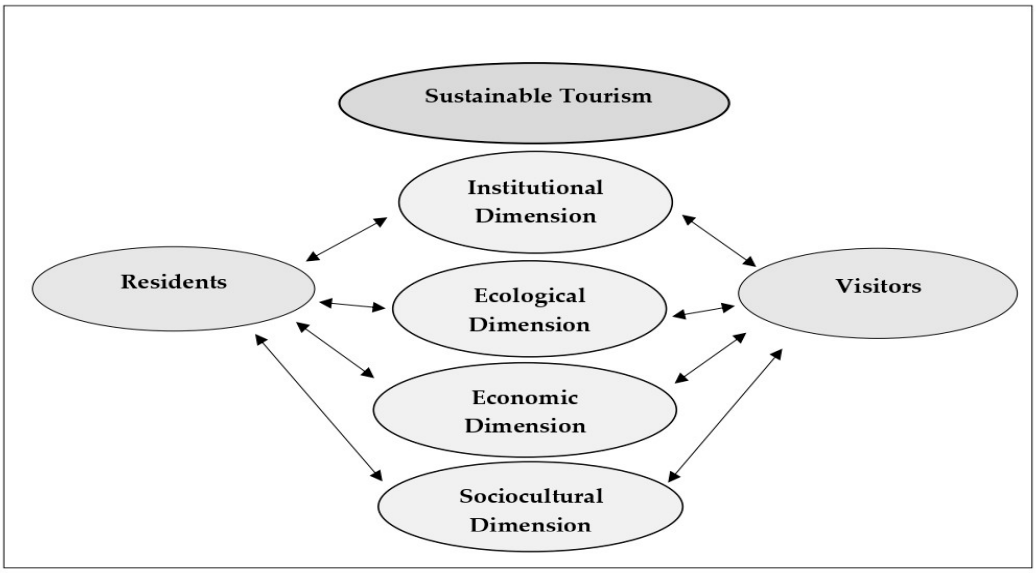

Figure 2. Scientific sampling design. Source: authors.

Table 1. Perceptions of the dimensions of sustainable tourism (n = 1380).

Items	Residents (48.55%)			Visitors (51.45%)		
Dimensions of Sustainable Tourism	**α**	**SD**	**Mean**	**α**	**SD**	**Mean**
Institutional Dimensions	0.600	1.221	3.15	0.611	1.255	3.59
Visitors are guided through the protected area by trained guides and representatives of the local community		1.397	2.59		1.315	3.08
Visitors to the protected area can see the local brands (wineries, ethno houses, handicrafts, local enterprises, etc.)		1.214	3.10		1.115	4.25
In the protected area, the manager's instructions on nature protection and visitors' activities are followed		1.234	3.22		1.223	3.33
Visitors are provided with information that reflects the history of the reserve, population, and settlements		1.231	3.68		1.231	3.68
Ecological Dimensions	0.712	1.203	3.43	0.733	1.121	4.06
There is the joint role of visitors and residents in protecting the area		1.317	3.01		1.242	3.62
There are facilities, services, and activities available to visitors and residents in the protected mountain area		1.240	3.61		1.052	4.54
There are tourist facilities without impacts on the mountain environment		1.231	3.68		1.229	4.02
Economic Dimensions	0.609	1.239	3.63	0.618	1.201	3.75
Visitors buy local products		1.209	4.11		1.105	4.33
Visitors are interested in the domestic economy		1.204	3.42		3.231	3.98
Residents work in the protected area		1.317	3.02		1.220	3.11
Visitors use various services of the mountain ethno villages		1.014	4.62		1.300	4.05
Visitors support the payment of tickets to the protected area		1.317	3.00		1.233	3.29
Sociocultural Dimensions	0.680	3.233	3.90	0.713	1.228	4.07
Visitors interact with residents		1.115	4.21		1.106	4.32
Visitors and residents share experiences		1.220	3.11		1.213	3.29
Visitors are interested in local traditions and customs		1.127	4.03		1.113	4.21
Visitors visit local museums and events		1.132	4.01		1.106	4.23
Visitors are interested in historical sites		1.205	4.13		1.117	4.28

Items measured on a 5-point Likert agreement scale; α—Cronbach's alpha reliability.

Table 2. Scale items for the satisfaction index (n = 1380).

Index	Residents (48.55%)		Visitors (51.45%)	
	α	**Mean**	**α**	**Mean**
	0.654	**3.75**	**0.724**	**3.76**
Tourism in this protected area produces various benefits for me		3.86		4.09
The attractiveness of the area has been improved because of tourism		3.67		3.78
For me, this area is an important tourist destination		4.02		3.96
I am satisfied with the tourism of this area		3.46		3.21

5. Data

The main scientific assumptions were that significant scientific results could be achieved using the mentioned research methods and techniques. These assumptions included to what extent did the perceptions of residents and visitors indicate the level of institutional, environmental, economic, and sociocultural sustainability in the Fruška Gora National Park, i.e., to what extent did these dimensions of sustainability affect the level of satisfaction of residents and visitors with the state of sustainable tourism.

The random sample method surveyed a total of 1380 respondents (670 residents and 710 visitors). The framework for the selection of the survey sample was the total number of inhabitants living in the surveyed area. The sample of resident polls included a total of six largest settlements located in the research area (out of a total of eight large and significant ones) [50]. Due to the uneven share of the population from these settlements in the total population, and in order to achieve representative data, the relevant sample size was determined for each of the observed areas. The total population in the areas selected for the poll was approximately 51,000.

The authors planned to collect 700 resident responses. After the survey was completed, we found out that 670 questionnaires were correctly filled in. As was emphasized, the residents were chosen through the method of random sampling. The settlements where we surveyed residents from the area of Fruška Gora were: Petrovaradin (222 respondents), Sremski Karlovci (170), Irig (130), Beočin (62), Sremska Kamenica (54), and Vrdnik (32). Residents were surveyed through various forms of personal contact. In addition, the online version of the questionnaire was delivered with the help of various thematic groups within social networks, which have a significant number of members and followers among them.

For the distribution of online questionnaires, we used the e-mail addresses of certain travel agents; when we surveyed in person, it was with the help of a written questionnaire. Among the respondents, women comprised the majority (56.7%). The average age was 40 (ranging from 18 to 77). Most of the residents had secondary education (59%). A total of 23% of respondents had primary education, 12% had higher education, and 6% had a master's or doctoral degree. A majority of respondents were employed and earned a living (75.6%), followed by the unemployed (13.4%), students (6.9%), and retirees (4.1%).

The basis for the selection of the survey sample of visitors' attitudes was the average number of visitors who visited the Fruška Gora National Park in the last two years before this research. The average number of visitors was approximately 30,000 annually before the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey of approximately 750 visitors was planned, but only 710 questionnaires were correctly filled in. The survey of tourists was conducted within the protected area during their visit to the visitor center or in accommodation or recreational facilities.

In addition, the tourist survey was conducted with the help of online questionnaires within thematic groups on social networks that had a significant number of followers and members. Respondents visited the area of the Fruška Gora National Park at least once. The problem that arose during the field research was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected some visitors who did not want to answer questions in direct contact, which reduced the number of predicted respondents.

Out of the total number of visitors, 403 were domestic and 307 were foreign visitors. Foreign visitors came from Hungary (42), Croatia (40), Montenegro (38), Bosnia and Herzegovina (33), Slovenia (28), Romania (20), Bulgaria (19), Austria (19), Switzerland (16), Germany (13), Greece (9), Italy (8), the USA (6), Canada (6), the Russian Federation (5), and the United Kingdom (5). Additionally, among the respondents, women were in the majority (52.3%). The average age was 44 (in the age range of 18 to 65). The research was carried out in 2021, from April to November.

6. Results and Discussion

The test of variable reliability was carried out to examine the dimensions of sustainability and respondent satisfaction with the sustainable tourism development in the

protected area. The indices were computed as variable means comprising each dimension (independent variables). The results of the regression analysis application indicated a high level of satisfaction with the above-mentioned four dimensions of sustainability. The Cronbach's alpha scores were 0.60 and 0.61 (residents and visitors) for the institutional dimension (four items), 0.71 and 0.73 for the ecological dimension (three items), 0.71 and 0.73 for the economic dimension (five items), 0.68 and 0.71 for the sociocultural dimension (five items) (Table 1), and 0.69 and 0.76 for the satisfaction index for both groups of respondents (Table 2). The institutional dimension from the responses given by residents was comparably less reliable. Cotrel et al. [60] pointed out that an "α" of 0.60 could be accepted as reliable in studies with six or fewer examined items [31]. An alpha score of 0.7 or higher was the desired reliability, while 0.6 or higher was an acceptable reliability coefficient, according to Nunnally and Bernstein [61], Obradović et al. [38], Obradović et al. [59], and Trišić et al. [58].

The sociocultural dimension had the highest value in both groups of respondents (M = 3.90; M = 4.07). The environmental dimension followed in the visitors' responses (4.06), then the economic dimension (3.63 and 3.75), and the institutional sustainability dimension (3.15 and 3.59). In examining the dimensions of sustainable tourism development, the institutional dimension had relatively lower average values.

By analyzing the results from Table 1, statistically significant differences in the answers of the respondents could be noticed. It was evident that residents and visitors had different perceptions of all items in the questionnaire. There were significant demographic differences among respondents, i.e., they had different attitudes toward the dimensions of sustainability. In addition, they were completely independent in completing the questionnaire. How the demographic characteristics of the respondents influenced the perceptions of the dimensions of sustainable tourism in this protected area is the subject of future research by the authors.

The values in Table 1 show the results of measuring the perception of residents and visitors about the set items. From these results, we concluded that four dimensions of sustainability had values above the average (the values were mainly between three and four). This enabled the analysis of the obtained item values and the improvement of individual values as part of the planning measures of this protected area's managers and as part of tourism planning. The dimensions of sustainability with the highest values were the ecological and sociocultural dimensions (Figure 3). The obtained results of the regression analysis indicated a relative satisfaction of residents and tourists with the dimensions of sustainability. The results were similar to those obtained by Cottrell et al. [60], where the environmental and economic sustainability dimensions had the highest values. Altogether, the ecological dimension was identified as the dimension that affected the highest level of satisfaction of residents and visitors in this research as well. The average values of residents' and visitors' perceptions of sustainability dimensions can be seen in Figure 3.

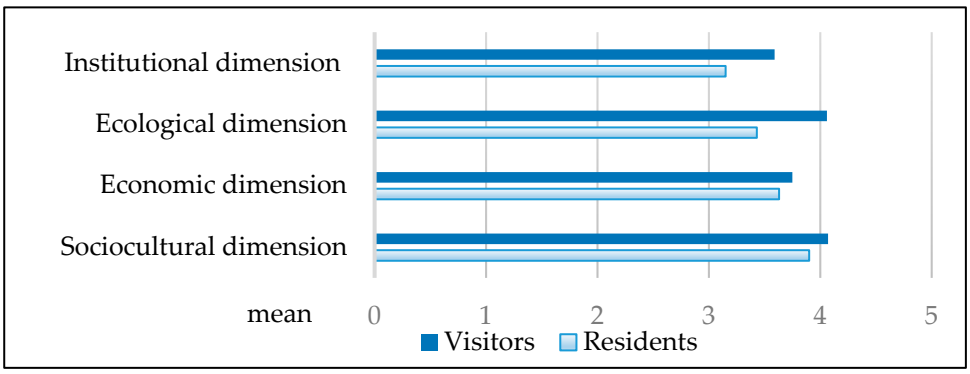

Figure 3. Mean response rates to sustainable dimensions.

The examined values of the sustainability dimensions indicated a relatively average value of sustainable tourism (the values were mostly between three and four). The overall mean values of satisfaction with the development of sustainable tourism were M = 3.75 for the resident responses and M = 3.76 for the visitor responses (Table 2).

Using the regression analysis, we could determine the extent to which the dimensions of sustainability contributed to the satisfaction of residents and visitors with the state of sustainable tourism [31,38,60,62–64]. The assumption was supported by all four dimensional scores being significant predictors of satisfaction with tourism [24,28,31], accounting for 30% (residents) and 33% (visitors) of the variances explained ($R_1^2 = 0.301$; $R_2^2 = 0.326$) (Table 3).

Table 3. Regression analysis of satisfactions (n = 1380).

Satisfaction with Tourism Items	Residents (48.55%)		Visitors (51.45%)	
	β [1]	*p*-Value	β [1]	*p*-Value
Institutional dimension	0.147	0.001	0.137	0.001
Ecological dimension	0.213	0.013	0.229	0.003
Economic dimension	0.184	0.006	0.124	0.001
Sociocultural dimension	0.201	0.021	0.192	0.011

[1] Standardized β value used. $R_1^2 = 0.301$; $R_2^2 = 0.326$.

Based on the results obtained by analyzing the data from Table 3, we could conclude that the sequence of observed individual values was identical for both groups of respondents (residents and visitors). Additionally, the research analysis indicated that the highest-ranked satisfactions were the satisfaction of residents with the ecological and sociocultural dimensions of sustainability and the satisfaction of visitors with the ecological and sociocultural dimensions of sustainability. The quality and attractiveness of a tourist destination are significantly determined by the culture, tourism, sports, and other offers [65,66]. The results highlighted the increase in the sustainability of tourism processes and the greater influx of environmentally aware consumers–tourists, a target that is becoming more and more important today when faced with the almost marginal nature of mass tourism. This could serve the authors in future research on the attitudes and satisfaction of visitors to the Fruška Gora National Park in order to define particular measures to improve the sustainable tourism development [67,68]. If we analyzed the currently obtained values by researching the four dimensions of sustainability, it could be seen that for residents and visitors of this protected area, the most important were those tourist activities and items of ecological and sociocultural sustainability [69] that also contributed to the greatest satisfaction.

7. Conclusions

When planning tourism in this protected area, it was necessary to improve certain activities so that economic and institutional sustainability had a more significant impact on the sustainable tourism development and the satisfaction of residents and visitors. One of the measures was strengthening the role of the local population in tourism planning and development [70]. Additionally, significant improvements in natural values and environmental protection and the more important promotion of cultural elements could contribute to economic benefits in this national park. Thus, the overall state of sustainable tourism would have significantly higher values.

The Fruška Gora National Park, as a part of the Fruška Gora mountain, has excellent geographical and traffic positions. The vicinity of the capital and major cities of Serbia and countries in the region and the EU allows for easy access to this tourist destination. The national park has significant natural and social values. It is rich in rare geological forms and endangered and rare plant and animal species. In a relatively small area, visitors can admire the beauty of preserved nature with protected species, as well as a large number of

medieval monasteries. Thus, special attention must be paid to the protection of nature and anthropogenic elements and their improvement when planning tourism.

The special value of this area was reflected in the combination of natural and anthropogenic factors. This conclusion was indicated by the analysis of all responses related to the four dimensions of sustainability in this protected mountain area. When comparing the average individual responses, we noticed a relatively small difference in the values of resident and visitor replies in the four dimensions of sustainability. The respondents rated the ecological dimension to be of highest importance. Therefore, we could conclude that, for them, environmental protection was the most important activity and a pillar of sustainable tourism development. Such a value indicates that the managers of the Fruška Gora National Park must give crucial positions to the environmental principles and improvement of natural values when planning tourism development. In addition to the environmental dimension of sustainability, the sociocultural and economic dimensions also had significant values in the respondents' answers. Particular emphasis was placed on the availability of local products and services and the mutual interaction of residents and visitors. Attendance at local events, cultural institutions and historical monuments and sites, mutual benefits from tourism, and other items were also significant. Somewhat less valuable were the responses of residents and visitors to the issue of institutional sustainability.

These examinations pointed out the significant problems that the Fruška Gora National Park faces in its development. This was also noticed by the respondents, who gave appropriate assessments. The main problems were the uncontrolled use of resources by the local population, environmental pollution through waste and wastewater, proximity to agricultural land and the use of chemicals, and weak control from the local population, which is little involved in the management processes. Such research results are at the basis for understanding and solving the problems of this protected area development, so that it can satisfy tourists and include the local population.

Through strengthening management processes and involving local people in planning and management in this protected mountain area, the institutional dimension of sustainability could enhance its importance in the sustainable tourism development. In particular, in the following phases, winning territorial marketing strategies could definitely focus on the potential for developing activities that are complementary to sustainable agriculture (the processing of agricultural products, forestry, etc.) and diversification (accommodation, services, etc.). Thus, the residents can take advantage of the growing demand for tourism and hiking in rural areas, and increase awareness as an element of the activation of innovative sustainable services.

By researching the satisfaction of guests and local residents, we could conclude that the order of the obtained individual values was identical for both residents and visitors. The reached data indicated that each dimension of sustainability significantly contributed to the residents' and visitors' satisfaction with sustainable tourism development. By comparing all responses from visitors and residents, it could be deduced that the Fruška Gora National Park could be a sustainable tourism destination. The authors had obstacles and limits in their research due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the realization of social contacts. Because of that, the number of respondents was smaller than expected. It was possible to overcome these restrictions by adhering to strict measures and regulations regarding the epidemiological situation. In addition, the bad epidemiological situations affected tourist movements, so the number of visitors to the Fruška Gora National Park was significantly reduced. However, these obstacles posed new challenges to the authors, which were reflected in the continuation of research into the sustainable development of this destination in the post-COVID-19 period.

The results of this paper could serve the authors in future research on individual factors and dimensions of sustainability in other protected areas that can be significant tourist destinations for the development of sustainable tourism. Observing the results of individual tests could help to decide on strategies that can be used to influence the development of less-represented factors of sustainable tourism. This could improve the

overall sustainability of both this and other protected areas. The research results could help other authors who consider sustainable tourism in numerous tourist destinations with a sensitive ecosystem. They include rural areas, marinas, deserts, historical sites, and others. The research in this work is extremely important, as it can provide a direction for protecting nature with the help of tourism and improve its values by involving residents and tourists in the sustainable development of tourism. A significant contribution of this research was to provide valuable information to managers of protected areas on how to plan and organize tourism without degrading tourism potentials and factors to remain sustainable.

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