Segmenting protected area visitors by activities: A case study in Paklenica National Park, Croatia

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Abstract

To date, a variety of market segmentation approaches have been employed to identify homogenous visitor segments in wilderness and protected area settings. This study focuses on activity-based segmentation of specific subgroups of visitors, specifically visitors of Paklenica National Park, Croatia. Data were randomly collected from visitors by means of self-administered questionnaires using a face-to-face approach (n=352). Hierarchical and

non-hierarchical cluster analysis enabled the identification of two distinct and managerially relevant segments: Activists and Passivists. The segments were characterised by the perceived importance of desired benefits, travel behaviour, environmental commitment and socio-demographic characteristics. The study findings revealed significant segment differences in terms of the perceived importance of desired benefits, travel behaviour and environmental commitment. Yet, for each segment, inter-correlations between the desired benefit dimensions were examined. Here, the results indicated that each segment was more likely to perceive desired benefits through the wider prism of their positive mutual relationships than by considering them to be a self-determining unit. Socio-demographic descriptors exhibited a weak role in segment characterisation. The study findings might directly assist Park managers to develop more effective visitor management strategies and to enhance marketing strategies in general. Specific practical implications of the study findings are also discussed.

Citation: Bari?, D., P. Ani? and M. Bedoya (2016) Segmenting protected area visitors by activities: A case study in Paklenica National Park, Croatia. *European Journal of Tourism Research* 13, pp. 103-121