A holistic framework for the development of a sustainable touristic model

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Abstract: This article reflects on confronting Western Balkans countries with the sustainable development. The goal of this paper is to present the importance of the development of the concept of the ST model and its role in economic and social development of rural areas of the Western Balkans. The purpose of the model is to find out how ST can contribute to the development of rural areas and economic growth in the Western Balkans, and to provide an answer to the research question: which areas of development processes and operations, and their aspects, are essential for the development of ST in the Western Balkans.

Keywords: sustainable development; regional development; Western Balkans; value added model; holistic approach


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Vedran Milojica is a PhD student. He completed his graduate studies at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management in Opatija, University in Rijeka. He is currently an apprentice in a firm. His research experience includes marketing in tourism, selective forms of tourism, international tourism, tourism in the European Union, achieving competitiveness in tourism and hospitality,
A holistic framework for the development of a sustainable touristic model

Entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality, etc. He has published numerous papers in scientific journals and in scientific conferences. He participates in professional programs of life-long learning.

Vasja Roblek is a PhD student at the Faculty of Management, University of Primorska, Slovenia. His current research areas are digital economy, knowledge management, organisational changes and sustainable development. He is the (co)author of number of articles in national and international scientific journals. He is a co-author of the two book chapters in scientific monographs published by Springer and book on sustainable development.

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1 Introduction

In the recent 25 years, sustainable development has become an extremely important social development concept. It is widely recognised as an overarching strategic objective of contemporary public policy (Macleod and Todnem, 2007). The awareness to preserve the natural and social environment, and protection of natural resources such as historical artefacts’ at the end of 80 and early ‘90s led to the development of the concept of sustainable development (Law et al., 2015; McManus, 2014).

The concept of sustainable development applied to a variety of business sectors, including tourism (Sharpley and Ussi, 2014). Tourism presents one of the key economic sectors for employment, wealth creation and social benefits in developed and developing countries. In accordance with the concept of sustainability the sustainable tourism (ST) has to include alongside economic and social components also the environmental one (Macleod and Todnem, 2007).

ST is using the concepts from other academic and intellectual areas. As such, it helps to understand better the economic, political, social, geographical and environmental processes. It is argued that ST wider engagement in the social sciences could contribute more to general social theory (Bramwell, 2007). ST research is focused on phenomena’s associated with political, ecological, cultural, mobility, transition pathways, and behavioural and systems change (Bramwell, 2015). Studies have connected ST with politics, because of its contribution to the economic development and hegemonic value (Hall, 2010).

The concept of ST has a different meaning for the researchers and policy-makers. ST gained a wider social visibility and importance on the macro level by adopting the Cape Town Declaration. ST is recognised as a socially responsible tourism. The declaration on responsible tourism stresses the importance of responsible hospitality, creating better living conditions for both locals and tourists, and respects the ethical principles and human rights (rejects controversial tourist offer ‘on the outskirts of pleasure’, the so called pleasure periphery). Sustainable (responsible) tourism minimises the negative impacts of tourism (The Cape Town Declaration, 2002). ST is emerged in part, as an ethical response to negate some of the impacts traditionally caused by unplanned mass tourism (Dinan and Sargeant, 2000). It has adopted a different set of social practices
(every day consumption and every day ethics) and according to them ST can be conceptualised as an emerging form of ethical consumption due to the shared history, principles and ethics of both (Hanna, 2009).

At the micro level, there has been the development of commercial and managerial approaches which enable the growth of cultural and heritage tourism (Jamal and Kim, 2005; Ren et al., 2010; Tribe, 2010).

Weaver (2006) states that ST reduces negative impacts on the environment and cultural and natural attractions. ST impacts of increasing the positive effects such as the development of rural areas, employment in the local environment, the performance of tourism enterprises and tourist satisfaction. The natural resources are used in such a way that they remain available in the long term.

Ham and Weiler (2002) consider that ST constitutes such a development and tourism maintenances that this remains the long-term economic success. The natural and built environment does not destroy, but it protects. It should be noted that the policy of ST includes the protection of the environment, which encourages the development of ecotourism (Fons Sanagustin et al., 2011).

1.1 Object of the study

The paper focuses on the conditions of the ST implementation and its influence on the regional development of rural areas in the Western Balkans countries.

Western Balkans countries are influenced by different sociological, cultural, political and economic characteristics. The entire area was under the influence of the communist dictatorship system from 1945 to 1990. This has left consequences that are visible in a high level of centralisation, lack of proper regional policies and institutions and top-down planning approach employed for a long period (Taras, 2015; Milutinovic and Jolovic, 2010; Alexander, 2003).

Many local authorities in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina have already passed and implemented sustainable development strategies (Milutinovic and Zivkovic, 2014). Milutinovic and Jolovic (2010) have presented the current situation in local sustainable development strategic planning and argued that the problems in the whole region were similar: low capacities for implementation, methodological shortcomings and financial barriers. Moreover, a lack of political will at all levels, combined with a short-term focus, tends to inhibit the government and businesses from taking tough decisions to secure the long-term public interest in local sustainable development.

1.2 The concept and goal of the study

The goal of the paper is, based on the methods of holistic thinking, to develop a holistic model of integration of ST development scheme in the rural areas of Western Balkan. In this context, it is necessary to understand ST as a more complex research phenomena that meaningfully and critically connects natural, social and economic elements and can construe these elements as interdependent variables of the Western Balkan region (Bardy et al., 2013; Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2012).

It is a participative process where government agencies, local community, tourism industry and other stakeholders are involved in managing change and adoptions that will have influence on them (McMorran et al., 2014; Vernon et al., 2005).
The theoretical development of concepts of ST models traced two directions (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). The first line of direction comes within the definition of ST, promoting sustainable development and does not include mass tourism (Giampicoli and Kalis, 2012; Hunter, 1997). The concept of a sustainable development model, designed by Hunter (1997) derives from the relationships between the different stages of development of ST to environmental and socioeconomic factors that influence the development itself. The author is using a decreasing function of graph illustrating the link between tourism and sustainable development. It is important to emphasise that this model does not focus on a wide range of tourism, but it is narrowly focused on the ST, that is built on the grounds of the sustainable development.

The second concept follows the idea that sustainable and unsustainable tourism are related and cannot be treated separately. The authors of this theory argue the fact that all forms of tourism have to include the concepts of sustainable development (Fennell, 1998; Weaver, 2006).

In the context of creating the sustainable touristic model the authors followed Hunter’s concept. The model arises from the relations between developers of the strategic factors and stakeholders which will, with political measures, investments and cooperation in carrying out action plans in the context of sustainable development of tourism, pursue their own goals and development of rural areas as well of the whole community in the region. This will have a significant impact on both environmental protection and the protection and the improvement of socioeconomic factors.

The purpose of our model is that policy-makers, stakeholders and potential investors with the involvement of socioeconomic factors, understand the progress of processes and natural and socioeconomic factors that influence the rise of ST as a parallel rural area. This will help them to create their own development policies.

The paper presents the importance of the development of the concept of ST and its role in economic and social development of rural areas of the Western Balkans.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Historical and political complexity of the Western Balkans

To understand the social relations and economic processes in the region, which influenced the socioeconomic development of the Western Balkans countries, it is necessary to understand the historical events in the area.

The end of the First World War in 1918 brought the establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. All countries of today’s Western Balkans (excluding Albania) were part of the Kingdom, and after 1945 they belonged to the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ). It should be noted that until 1991, most of today’s West Balkans countries had the same political and economic system (Zimmerman, 2014).

The disintegration of Yugoslavia began in 1991 and ended with the separation of Kosovo from Serbia in 2012 (Bieber et al., 2014). On the territory of the former Yugoslavia after the collapse in 1991, three wars were conducted: in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) (Gruber, 2014).

The identity of the Western Balkans is defined by its geographical position. In this region, different cultures have crisscrossed throughout centuries. It has been a juncture between the Latin and Greek bodies of the Roman Empire, the destination of a massive
influx of pagan Slavs, an area where Orthodox and Catholic Christianity met, as well as the meeting point between Islam and Christianity (Salzmann, 2003).

Due to the multi-cultural and ethnic diversity of the population in the Western Balkans region, it still comes to political conflicts that have a negative impact on the regional economic development and on attracting foreign investors (Allcock, 2000; Koneska, 2014; Meier, 2005). The last such conflict arose in 2015. The leadership of the Republic of Srpska (part of Bosnia and Herzegovina) protested against Turkish investments in the region (Einspieler, 2015).

**Figure 1** Western Balkans countries

The scope of the study of this paper includes the Western Balkans (Figure 1). The region now includes six Balkan countries, all of which are in the pre-accession negotiations with the European Union. The countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia (European Commission, 2014a). Croatia has joined the European Union on 1 July 2013, which is the reason the authors’ did not include it in the research framework.

### 2.2 The economic view on the Western Balkans

The geographical characteristic that has an important influence on the economic development of the Western Balkans is that it is still mostly rural. The share of population living in rural areas is 57% in Albania (2013), around 60% in BIH (2013), 32.1% in Macedonia (2010), 38% in Montenegro (2013), 60% in Kosovo (2013) and approximately 43% in Serbia (2013) (Rural Poverty Portal, 2015).

The rate of the rurality of West Balkans results in the fact that agriculture is still important for employment and poverty reduction. The share of agriculture in total GDP amounts 8.1 % in Bosnia (2013), 7.9% in Serbia (2013), 10.2% % in Montenegro (2011),
19.5% in Albania (2011) and 12.9% in Kosovo (2009), 11.3% in Macedonia (2010). The agricultural sector employed 18.9% of the total labour force in Bosnia (2013), 23.9% in Serbia (2013), 18.8% in Macedonia, 6.3% in Montenegro (2011), 54.6% in Albania (2012) and 23.6% in Kosovo (2010) (The World Fact Book, 2015).

All the states have an open market economy, most of which are in the upper-middle income range ($4,000–$12,000 p.c.). The gross domestic product (purchasing power parity) per capita in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia amounts between $10–$15,000 USD (2013), and in Bosnia and Kosovo amounts below $10,000 USD (2013) (The World Fact Book, 2015).

As a result of rurality in the Western Balkans countries, there is a high rate of unemployment and an above-average percentage of people living below the poverty line (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unemployment rate</th>
<th>Population below poverty line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>16.9% (2013 est.)</td>
<td>14.3% (2012 est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>44.3% (2013 est.)</td>
<td>18.6% (2007 est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>27.9% (2013 est.)</td>
<td>20% (2009 est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>28.6% (2013 est.)</td>
<td>30.4% (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>19.1% (2012 est.)</td>
<td>6.6% (2010 est.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>20.1% (2013 est.)</td>
<td>9.1% (2013 est.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Western Balkan local rural economies are increasingly diversified, however a significant share of households are still engaged in agriculture (Tankosić and Stojavljević, 2014). In recent years, especially in Albania and less in other countries, changes in the labour market occurred. The number of employees in the service sector and tourism is increasing (European Commission, 2014b). But, overall, rural development still has a strong agricultural character. The governments should take into consideration to reform and redesign the rural development policy as agriculture is no more the only way to improve rural living standards (Chambers, 2014). Researchers found out that there is a strong relationship between governance and rural development strategies impacts on rural communities’ livelihoods. In fact, there are strong correlations between rural institutions efficacy and effectiveness and rural development policy outcomes (Rodríguez-Pose and Hardy, 2015; Torre, 2014; Zasada et al., 2015). In general, quality of life in rural areas is low and job opportunities are limited (Knox and Pinch, 2014). This is the reason why local governments have to play an important role in fostering innovative processes and approaches to agriculture and the local economy, thus helping diversification of the economic-base and strengthening the socioeconomic structure of rural areas (van Assehe et al., 2014). Governance comprises the mechanisms, institutions and processes of decisions making and implementation of decisions (Denhardt and Dendhardt, 2015). It needs to diversify the local economies in order to replace the loss of agricultural jobs, and sustaining the vitality of the rural areas by developing off-farm and non-farm income-generating activities (Harbaugh, 2014). In rural areas, policies must also be adopted to cope with the climatic and socioeconomic changes (Herrero et al., 2014).
Development of the ST policy based on cultural heritage, nature, and agriculture products (food and wine) plays an important role of development in this process (Lanfranchi and Giannetto, 2014).

The inclusion of the ST can enable the creation of external employment activities for members of the family farm and generating additional income (McGehee et al., 2014). The ST will also have an influence on the promotion of the green economy (Miller et al., 2015).

It can be concluded that governance is relevant for the rural livelihood diversification and rural development, both as the process and the structure. This can be achieved by involving public, civil society and private stakeholders in the development of the ST projects.

3 Research context

3.1 The holistic concept of ST in the context of enabling the sustainable development

The concept of sustainability, adapted to the socioeconomic characteristics of the Western Balkans region (Figure 2) is based on the four cores of sustainable development. These four cores are pointing on at economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being which is well in line with the concept of ST (Jamrozy, 2007). In this context, it should be noted that these ‘cores’ differ from the four ‘perspectives’ that usually comprise economic, social, environmental and institutional development (Bardy et al., 2013).

**Figure 2** The concept of sustainability, adapted to the socioeconomic characteristics of the western Balkans region (see online version for colours)

![Figure 2](image-url)
All economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being depends on effective and efficient working institutions (Lemos and Agrawal, 2006). They enable the development of long-term improvement of welfare components, namely a responsible and balanced increase in economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the present generation without compromising the ability of development and prosperity of future generations (Bertoncelj, 2014; Frey and Stutzer, 2010).

We use the holistic approach because its model includes not only the environmental dimensions of sustainability, but also the structural reforms that contain long-term planning to ensure continuity in policy through social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of sustainability (Bardy et al., 2013; Dominici and Roblek, 2016). Consequently, a valid sustainable strategy should include both an economic and environmental perspective and the development of the social-political and cultural aspects of development (Gibson et al., 2013).

The economic aspects of sustainability, along with the social and environmental aspects, provide the rural area with the competitive advantage that leads to viability and enables the existence and further development (Dominici et al., 2016).

The very existence of society is closely linked to the concept of sustainability, which aims to social well-being and natural harmony, and this has to be developed at the level of individual countries and entire regions with established links between members of different nations, cultures and religions. This symbiosis between the residents of the Western Balkans only develop and only is maintained if it is embedded in cultural activities and if ethical principles are considered within the ST strategies for rural areas (Hawkes, 2001).

Members of different cultural and ethnic groups in the Western Balkans have to face challenges of multiculturalism and understand it as a social challenge. This challenge is the need to focus on the development of the concept of cultural sustainability as a development agenda for rural areas. It is necessary to start from the thesis that cultural affiliation does not happen just by being born in the community, but by developing a long-lasting process of experiencing, learning, understanding and a sense of common according to the principles of equality (Read, 2000).

Natural and cultural resources of the Western Balkans allow the integration of regional communities in rural areas to participate in the development of tourist farms, agro-tourism, gourmet and wine tourism and local events such as trade fairs, events, and involving village traditions – Guča (Gligorijevic, 2014; Hudelson, 2014; Vujicic et al., 2012).

In the past 25 years, culture has become an interdependent part of sustainability, and as such is extremely greatly contributing to sustainable development (Bertoncelj et al., 2014). Here it is necessary to mention the role of UNESCO, which also plays an extremely important role in the protection and international recognition of natural and cultural heritage of the Western Balkans (e.g., Mostar – BIH, Felix Romuliana – Serbia, Gjirokastra – Albania, Perast-Bay of Kotor-Montenegro, Dečani Monastery-Kosovo).

Following the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations from 2010 and 2011, contribution of culture to sustainable development has been clearly identified (UNESCO, 2010, 2011).

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions defines cultural activities, goods and services as such that contain or convey cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have. Among them, in addition to the traditional arts field (performing arts, which include drama,
opera, ballet and concert activities, as well as art and cultural heritage, with the public sector value) also includes film and video, television and radio, video games, new media, books and publishing (UNESCO, 2005). As an example, it can be noted that the Gjorkastra festival in Albania has been selected by the UNESCO as an ‘intangible cultural heritage’.

The importance of culture as a facilitator of economic development has become evident from the fact that in the European Community it employs 6.7 million people, or 3% of all employees (TERA Consultants, 2010), contribution to the GDP of the EU economy amounts 3.3% (Frontier Economics CSD, 2012), and it is more flexible than the entire European economy (EUROSTAT, 2012).

Culture is closely linked to ST. The principles of ST development integrate environmental, socio-cultural and economic aspects of tourism development and require a balance between them. Cultural tourism represents 40% of ST. In the period from 1998 to 2008 it averaged 7% growth in less developed countries, with a peak of 12% growth (UNWTO, 2011).

As an important example of integration of culture and ST, which contributes significantly to the international visibility, it is necessary to mention the following cases: BIH – Sarajevo Film Festival, Macedonia – Ohrid choir festival and in Serbia-Belgrade International Theatre Festival.

ST follows all four cores of sustainable development (Figure 2). It reduces negative impacts on the environment and the cultural and natural heritage, and increases positive effects such as the development of rural areas, employment in the local environment, the performance of tourism enterprises and tourist satisfaction (Weaver, 2006). Strategic development of ST projects in rural areas also represents a good opportunity to acquire foreign direct investments. Resources are used in such a way that they remain available in the long term. Ham and Weiler (2002) believe that ST means such development and maintenance of tourism that this remains a long-term economic success. The natural and built environment does not destroy, but protects natural resources. Hardy et al. (2002) as opposed to Ham and Weiler pointed out that ST cannot be based solely on profits and the protection of the environment, but care must be given to the development of local communities. It is believed that this can be achieved with the participation of local stakeholders in the processes of implementing ST. The policy of ST includes the protection of the environment. An example of good practice is eco-tourism as a form of ST. The basic purpose of eco-tourism is the protection of natural areas, revenue generation, education, local participation and spatial planning plot ratio (Ross and Wall, 1999).

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the Western Balkans countries have to include support programs for conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage, social capital and their own national infrastructure in their development strategies. These are all attachments that will allow further development of ST and create the conditions for the acquisition of foreign direct investment.

In relation to what was previously mentioned, the authors aim to answer the following research questions:

- How can ST contribute to the development of rural areas and economic growth in Western Balkans?
- What areas of development processes and operations, and their aspects, are essential for the development of ST in the Western Balkans?
3.2 Research method

The paper is, based on the methods of holistic thinking, to develop a holistic model of integration of ST development scheme in the rural areas of Western Balkan. In this context, it is necessary to understand ST as a more complex research phenomena that meaningfully and critically connects natural, social and economic elements and can construe these elements as interdependent variables of the Western Balkan region (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2012). It is going for the participative process where government agencies, local community, tourism industry and other stakeholders are involved in managing change and adoptions that will have influence on them (McMorran et al., 2014; Vernon et al., 2005).

For the Western Balkans countries, a pre-accession negotiation with the EU countries represents a challenge for the development of projects in the field of rural tourism. This kind of tourism is understood as a form of ST that has the support of European funds and state, provincial and municipal authorities. European funds provide financial and technical assistance for the development of tourism forms that enable sustainability, jobs outside agriculture and linking rural to urban areas (for example, information highway) and take care of the economic development of rural areas and regions (Babic, 2013; Simovic, 2012). In this direction, this study is investigating ST through a holistic approach, in order to understand its influence to processes of economic growth and regional development. Through a review of the literature on the Western Balkans, ST and economic theory, the authors created a holistic framework by choosing a set of interdependent variables based on the social, economic, environmental, and cultural perspectives of the region. This rests upon the assumption that state and local governments and different stakeholders on the micro level go for individual choice and act independently.

3.3 Analysis of the natural and socioeconomic resources which are influencing on the development of ST

Tourism and travel industry represents an important economic sector globally. Thus, in countries which have the local communities’ tourism industry, there are significant indirect and induced impacts (Murphy, 2013; Sharpley, 2000). The tourism sector provides countless development opportunities for lower and middle income countries. ST development can play an important role in the Western Balkans. The political features that include stable political environment, rule of law, anti-corruption enforcements, non-captive state, effective and sustainable reforms are the primary guarantee for the growth of foreign direct investments and consequently the economic development of the region including ST (Estrin and Uvalic, 2014).

Tourism can serve in a regional effort, as a vehicle for sustainable human development and economic integration among the nations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia), Montenegro, and Serbia (Vidovic et al., 2011). Statistical data show that in Western Balkans tourism is an important contributor to national GDP in Albania (16.7%, 2013), BiH (9.3%, 2013) and in Montenegro (20%, 2013). In 2013 tourism contributed to the employment: 15.2% in Albania, 10.7% in BiH and 18.3% in Montenegro. Capital investments in tourism were the highest in Montenegro (28%, 2013), BiH (4.2%, 2013) and in Albania (4.3%, 2013). It is estimated that from 2014 to 2024 tourism industry total
contribution to GDP will increase in Montenegro for 8.8%, Albania for 5.4% and BIH 5.4% (World Trade Tourism Council, 2014).

The Western Balkans countries are in the process of joining the European Union. The European Commission emphasises the importance of establishing the clear perspective of EU membership for Western Balkans as a key stabilising factor. The strategic goal in the current enlargement policy is reinforcing peace and stability in the Western Balkans (European Commission, 2014a). These two factors, if they can be warranted in such a multicultural and ethnically diverse environment, represent a basic guarantee for the establishment of a society and business environment development platforms (Feigs, 2006). For this purpose, it will be necessary to ensure the participation of countries within the region in the development of projects in the areas that will improve the quality of people’s lives (e.g., transport, energy, rule of law, migration, food safety, consumer and environmental protection and climate change) (Blockmans, 2007).

The Western Balkans countries have in the past years undertaken some measures for development of ST and consequent development of rural areas. In the process of joining the EU they still have some work in this area. Following, the authors have comprised the natural, cultural, historical and other resources which have a significant impact on the potential development of ST.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Albania and challenges for ensuring development of the ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Albania</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mountains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lakes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Waterfalls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protected wetlands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sandy and rocky beaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and historical heritage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ancient city of Butrint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Historic centres of Berat and Gjirokaster which are on the UNESCO list of World Cultural Heritage Sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for the ST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mountain tourism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sports tourism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rural tourism (agriculture and wine tourism)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cultural tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ecotourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenges for ensuring the development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of funding for cultural tourism development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undeveloped positive image due to past communism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Non-active implementation of tourism strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of coordination between ministries in terms of policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To rescue the problem with pollution of nature and the sea coast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ahn et al. (2009), Begolli (2014) and Western Balkans Report (2014)
Table 3  Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and challenges for ensuring development of the ST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bosnia and Herzegovina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jahorina and Bjelasnica, green hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kravica Waterfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tara River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and historical heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stari most (old bridge) in Mostar, and Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad (Republic Srbska) are on the UNESCO list of World Cultural Heritage Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarajevo – historical city of three cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical religious objects – religious tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for the ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of rural tourism development around Sarajevo, and River Neretva Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Green City program for Banja Luka (nature and sports tourism, spa tourism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of souvenir trademarks that reflect BiH cultural heritage, eco-tourism, wine tourism (Southern Herzegovina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenges for ensuring the development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative image inherited from the war, lack of tourist facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low quality of roads, lack of waste management and uneven accommodation quality in the whole country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficiency of qualified tour guides with good language skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of guide training programs, especially for mountain guides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4  Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Macedonia and challenges for ensuring development of the ST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macedonia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakes (Ohrid, Prilep)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains (Šar mountains, Osogovo – Belasica…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers (Vardar, Drin, Crna…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picturesque landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National parks (Pelister, Mavrovo, Galičica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and historical heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and historical sites, religious buildings (monasteries and churches), archaeological sites, villages and cities with authentic characteristics of Macedonian of Ottoman architecture and culture Lake Ohrid in the SW (a UNESCO World Heritage Site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for the ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City tourism, ecotourism, wine tourism, event tourism, cultural tourism, gastro-enological tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ahn et al. (2009) and Western Balkans Report (2014)
Table 4  Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Macedonia and challenges for ensuring development of the ST (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Macedonia</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The challenges for ensuring the development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ahn et al. (2009) and Western Balkans Report (2014)*

Table 5  Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Montenegro and challenges for ensuring development of the ST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Montenegro</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural and historical heritage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources for the ST</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The challenges for ensuring the development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ahn et al. (2009) and Western Balkans Report (2014)*
A holistic framework for the development of a sustainable touristic model

Table 6  Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Serbia and challenges for ensuring development of the ST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country: Serbia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and historical heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for the ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenges for ensuring the development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ahn et al. (2009), Erdeji et al. (2013), Maksin (2012) and Western Balkans Report (2014)

Table 7  Analyses of the sustainable characteristics in Kosovo and challenges for ensuring development of the ST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kosovo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and historical heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for the ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenges for ensuring the development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ahn et al. (2009) and Western Balkans Report (2014)

In Tables 2 to 7 the authors are presenting major sustainable characteristics and point out the deficiencies which need to be resolved in order to ensure ST in Western Balkans countries.
4 Introduced in the implementation of the holistic model of ST development scheme in the rural areas of Western Balkan

Construction of a holistic model of integration of ST development scheme in the rural areas of Western Balkan (Figure 3) depends on the contents and purpose of using the development factors and ST enablers. If the policy makers wish to achieve effective decision-making, successful cooperation is required among all who are involved.

The authors of this paper have applied the holistic approach in the context of the sustainable development factors that have a significant impact on the development processes of rural regions and of the deficiencies to be found. Specifically, all Western Balkans countries have a problem with the lack of education in the field of ST (Ahn et al., 2009). In consequence, the authors propose the development of a knowledge management system which should include the needs of the community for accessing, exchanging, learning and sharing the new knowledge about ST strategies. Knowledge, skills and values are subjective parts of the platform of goal realisation. All these specifications are expressed in the form of policies that should be provided as universal, meaningful and useful. The implementation of ST policies has an impact on developing the destination management. In this case, a tourism management, education and visitor management present a key source of regional competitive advantage.

Within the socioeconomic changes and adoptions, the characteristics of the natural, historical and social resources (historical and ethnic and religious factors) have to be considered. The governance goals have to be adapted with the legislation that will protect the natural and cultural heritage, allow subsidies and incentives for investors, prepare applicable tax legislation and encourage the emergence of the conservation funds. Political risks in the region should be minimised. The environment protection has to include the protection of the wildlife, cultural, water and land resources, waste disposal, recycling and energy consumption (see Table 2).

It is important that the policy makers know how to transform the intangible assets to increase the reorganisation of the socioeconomic policies in the regional economy. This can result as economic incentives for locals, local products and markets. Such cases are reforms in the agriculture sector, where clusters have to be established between the wine industry and tourism system. The Western Balkans wine regions have to prepare the marketing strategies for wine tourism and connect it with the heritage and religious tourism (Hudelson, 2014).

Concluding with a wider outlook, the authors wish to draw attention to the law of entropy which points out the importance of human resources which strive for continuous innovation in the society, and in the systems theory, the law of hierarchy of sequence and interdependence points out, that it is necessary to define the meaning of business objectives. The interdependence between the development factors and ST enablers has to deliver added value to the region and people. This value added encompasses the environmental impact assessment, recruitment of local staff, training and skills development, infrastructure development, financial planning and performance indicators that are important for the foreign investors and tourist.
The factors that have the significant impact of the regional ST development regarding our model are following:

- **Political, ethnic and religious equality**: with the integration of the Western Balkans and EU it is expected to speed up the development of civil society which will take over the ethical policy of the ethical mutual understanding. This is a prerequisite for peace in the region and to ensure the reduction of political risk, which will facilitate foreign investments and retained outflow of people in the region.

- **Development and use of human resources**: to ensure corporate sustainability, it is necessary to enable the development and adoption of policy retention of human resources.

- **Legislation**: the adoption of appropriate international comparative economic and environmental legislation is a prerequisite for development of a competitive business environment. In the region, it is necessary to suppress the corruption, which negatively affects the increase of foreign investments, which are a prerequisite for developing ST.

- **Environment protection**: in the 21st century, we are witnessing global warming and climate change, the solutions we are looking for in the context of sustainable development. Countries in the region need to take effective measures to reduce the use of natural resources, prevent pollution and to adopt sustainable measures to protect the natural environment.
Adaptive management in ST: tourist companies and creators of tourism policy in the
region must be aware that in the post-industrial era in the field of ST as a modern
business system whose key creators and providers are people shall apply
evolutionary laws, independently of the degree of automation and computerisation.
Irrespective of the forms of business systems so we encourage thinking about new
opportunities towards the sustainable development of rural areas. Old paradigms and
behavioural patterns that were effective in the previous system are no longer
appropriate.

5 Conclusions

The paper illustrates which factors of ST influence on the development of rural areas of
the Western Balkans. In this context, they concentrate on the economic, social and
environmental benefits.

This paper also offers a solid base for the decision-makers strategist and stakeholders.
It suggests that they have to incorporate tourism into the economic base of the region in
ways which allow different nations to make choices and to protect their traditions,
religion, lifestyles and environment from negative impacts.

Based on the analysis of the data obtained, the authors developed the holistic ST
model of integration of ST development scheme in the rural areas for rural areas. The
factors are pointed out in the model, which significantly affect the development of ST
and within this on rural area development.

The study presented in this paper is limited to a review of the existing literature.
According to national and cultural conditions our study can only determine the specific
public attitude and preferences for Western Balkans regions. The paper examines critical
factors that influence the role of ST in regional development. Therefore, the theoretical
factor analysis presented in this paper should be complemented by empirical research, in
order to determine the importance of those factors and stakeholders in role of ST in the
context of regional development.

We suggest that further studies about the importance of the proposed sustainable
factors could consider the influence of ST on (rural) regional development (not only
Western Balkans) in order to confirm the author’s analysis.

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