



International Scientific and Professional Conference

Politehnika 2025

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

28th November 2025



International Scientific and Professional Conference

Politehnika 2025

Conference Proceedings

Publisher:

The Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic Katarine Ambrozić 3, Belgrade www.politehnika.edu.rs

For the Publisher:

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Technical preparation and cover design:

The Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic, Organizing Committee

Design of the Conference logo:

Dušan Borović

Print:

The Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic, Katarine Ambrozić 3, Belgrade

Year of Publishing:

2025

The circulation:

400





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Environment and Sustainable Development

Occupational Health and Safety and Fire Safety

Smart Management Systems

Graphic Engineering

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Foreword

The International Scientific and Professional Conference POLITEHNIKA 2025 represents the eighth edition of the POLITEHNIKA scientific and professional events, occurring biannually since its inaugural event in 2011. POLITEHNIKA 2025 upholds a distinguished tradition and commitment to integrating higher education and practical application across a diverse spectrum of disciplines represented by defined thematic scopes.

Organized with the patronage of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, the Directorate for Occupational Safety and Health, the Office for Dual Education and National Qualifications Framework, the Chamber of Commerce of Belgrade, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia, Serbian Automotive Cluster - AC Serbia, Center for the Promotion of Science, Engineering Academy of Serbia and the Development Agency of Serbia, POLITEHNIKA 2025 stands as a collaborative platform at the intersection of academia, governmental institutions and industry.

Proudly holding its international status, the Conference POLITEHNIKA 2025 encompasses 10 thematic domains: Environment and Sustainable Development, Occupational Safety and Health and Fire Safety, Smart Management Systems, Graphic Engineering, Design, Traffic Engineering, Biotechnology, Pharmacy and Healthcare, Mechanical Engineering, Ecotourism and Rural development, and Mechatronics. By engaging experts, emerging professionals, and practitioners from these domains, the conference unifies fields of study programs of the Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic. The thematic scopes, coupled with the structure of the compiled papers in this Proceedings, exhibit a rich diversity and multidisciplinary approach, fundamentally contributing to a holistic examination and resolution of societal and scientific challenges.

Comprising over 200 peer-reviewed contributions, the Proceedings represent a substantial intellectual asset, aligning with the conference's overarching objective of fostering the exchange of knowledge, research findings, and professional experiences among experts from industry, research institutions, and higher education establishments.

The Proceedings of the International Scientific and Professional Conference POLITEHNIKA 2025 serve as a comprehensive snapshot of the current landscape within the thematic realms of the conference, offering both insights and directives for ongoing scientific and professional development. Moreover, it offers concrete solutions to practical challenges grounded in contemporary trends and pertinent insights.

The Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic extends its sincere appreciation to all conference supporters whose financial contributions played a pivotal role in its successful realization. Special acknowledgment is reserved for the authors of the papers, whose diligence and eagerness to present their work to a wider audience, alongside the reviewers and members of the International Scientific Committee, Program Committee and Organizational Committee, have collectively contributed to the triumph of the International Scientific and Professional Conference POLITEHNIKA 2025.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN HOTEL OPERATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF HOTEL "IVER"

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Abstract: The implementation of ecological principles in hotel operations brings numerous benefits by reducing the negative impacts of business activities and enhancing the positive effects of tourism on the local environment. This paper highlights the importance of environmental sustainability in hotel management, with Hotel "Iver" serving as a case study. Located near the Mokra Gora Nature Park, Hotel "Iver" represents an example of good practice in developing environmentally sustainable operations. A survey conducted among the hotel's employees examines the ecological aspects of hotel operations within the Mokra Gora area. While there is clear potential, additional measures and the adoption of various ecological principles and standards are necessary to fully develop sustainable tourism practices within the hotel industry, with the ultimate goal of protecting the environment.

Keywords: Hotel management, environmental sustainability, tourism, ecological practices, sustainable business.

1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN HOTEL MANAGEMENT WITHIN TOURISM

A distinctive characteristic of every tourism business is its strong connection with the overall offerings of the destination where it operates its facilities or conducts its business activities [1]. In the hotel industry, services are offered and realized on the hotel market through the sale of accommodation services and other hotel-related services, as well as special goods and services sold to tourists and the local population, thereby generating tourist consumption [2]. The application of the sustainable tourism concept involves minimizing the negative and maximizing the positive impacts of tourism on the environment and available resources. The key issue is the identification, monitoring, assessment, and management of the effects of tourism's impact on the environment and resources [3]. Hotels have the potential—and indeed the obligation—to reduce their environmental impact, as they are among the largest polluters and resource consumers in the service sector [4]. In previous activities, the greatest contribution of hotels to environmental protection has been achieved in the areas of energy savings, water consumption, green consumption, and waste minimization [5]. The tasks of ecological management of a tourist destination are focused on preserving the living environment of that area, which involves the application of global standards, active participation in relevant environmental initiatives, and creating partnerships with other stakeholders to achieve the goals [6]. The hospitality industry, together with the hotel sector, began implementing sustainable tourism measures as early as the 1990s, all aimed at reducing environmental impact. For this reason,

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hotels are considered pioneers in applying environmental protection and sustainable tourism practices [7]. Hotel chains also have the opportunity to implement environmental policies at the corporate strategic level, thereby significantly reducing their environmental impact on a large scale [4].

2. HOTEL "IVER" AS A FUNCTION OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Hotel "Iver" is located 10 km from the village center and 8 km from the tourist settlement "Mećavnik - Dryengrad." It is designed to meet all the attributes of a mountain lodge, where a fire always burns in the fireplace at its heart. Hotel "Iver" has 32 wooden rooms with a total of 50 beds. Guests of Hotel "Iver" have access to a swimming pool, sauna, Turkish bath, salt room, bowling alley, and gym [8]. For passionate skiing enthusiasts, Mećavnik has built accommodation at Iver, located on the trail between two ski slopes, on the lower eastern side of the ski resort. "Iver" also organizes a skiing school for beginners, and ski equipment rental is available [9]. Šargan Mokra Gora is a protected area to preserve and enhance the diversity and beauty of the landscape, as well as the variety and richness of wild plant and animal life, with particular emphasis on protecting endangered, rare, and endemic species of plants, animals, and their communities [10]. The level of protection in place brings numerous benefits to the local environment and to Hotel "Iver", which is closely integrated with its natural surroundings. Given its proximity to protected areas, Hotel "Iver" has strong potential for future operations based on principles of environmentally sustainable practices. In the past period the tourism and hospitality sector has made significant progress in developing measures to prevent environmental pollution, with substantial support from institutions and organizations of global or regional importance around the world [4]. The goals of sustainable tourism development include improving accommodation capacities, developing a tourist information system, expanding additional tourist offerings while achieving economic viability and local prosperity, and identifying and resolving current and potential conflicts between tourism and other resource-related activities [11]. In response to the challenges humanity faces due to climate change and global warming, the World Tourism Organization launched the "Hotel Energy Solutions" project. This initiative provides training, information, and technical support to assist small and medium-sized hotels [4]. A common best practice in the hotel industry is obtaining certifications such as the "Green Key.". " The "Green Key" certificate is a leading standard for excellence in environmental responsibility and sustainable business in the tourism industry. This prestigious certification represents a commitment by businesses to adhere to strict criteria set by the Foundation for Environmental Education. The "Green Key" guarantees guests that by choosing to stay at a "Green Key" certified property, they are contributing to environmental improvement [12]. In addition to the "Green Key," the "Green Globe" standard is also significant. The "Green Globe" standard promotes responsible and sustainable tourism practices, enabling the reduction of environmental and social impacts. The Green Globe standard is a structured sustainability assessment for travel and tourism businesses (such as tourist attractions, hotels, and conference centers) and their partners in the supply chain [11]. Following good business practices and meeting these standards brings long-term benefits to hotel establishments operating under principles of environmental management. The "Green Globe" standard and the "Green Key" are just some of the leading certifications that can positively influence the improvement of hotel operations aligned with sustainable business principles.

3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY RESEARCH

Below are the results of the survey research conducted in the territory of "Mokra Gora" and Hotel "Iver." Respondents' answers were anonymous, and the questionnaire included multiple-choice, rating scale, and open-ended questions. The research was carried out between August 10 and 25, 2024. In a sample of 30 respondents, 60% (18 respondents) were male, while 40% (12 respondents) were female. The majority of respondents were male. Based on the collected data, 80% of respondents are between 20 and 30 years old, while 20% belong to the group aged 31 to 40 years. No respondents in the age groups of 41 to 50 years or older were recorded in the questionnaire. Out of the total 30

respondents, 60% (18 individuals) have completed secondary education, while 40% (12 individuals) hold higher education degrees. None of the respondents indicated having only primary education, nor qualifications at the specialization, master's, or doctoral levels.

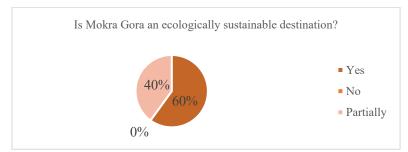


Chart 1. Is Mokra Gora an Environmentally Sustainable Destination? **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

To the question: "When asked whether Mokra Gora is an ecologically sustainable destination" 60% of respondents (18 individuals) answered affirmatively, while 40% (12 individuals) believe that Mokra Gora is only partially ecologically sustainable. No respondent rated the destination as not ecologically sustainable (*Chart 1*).

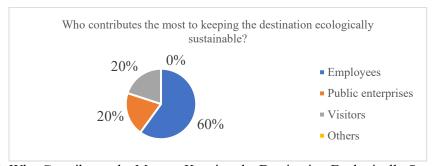


Chart 2. Who Contributes the Most to Keeping the Destination Ecologically Sustainable? **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

To the question: "Who contributes the most to keeping the destination ecologically sustainable?", 60% of respondents (18 individuals) believe that employees in tourism make the greatest contribution. An equal 20% of respondents (6 individuals) answered that the contribution comes from public enterprises and the visitors themselves. No respondent selected the "others" category. These data indicate a perception that employees bear the primary responsibility for maintaining the ecological sustainability of the destination, but also highlight the significant role of public institutions and visitors in this process (*Chart 2*).

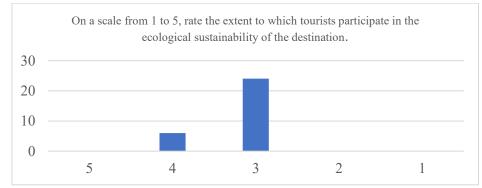


Chart 3. On a scale from 1 to 5, rate how much tourists contribute to the ecological sustainability of the destination **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

Out of the 30 respondents who participated in the survey, 80% gave a rating of 3, meaning that 24 respondents evaluated tourists' participation in the ecological sustainability of the destination as moderate. The remaining 20%, or 6 respondents, gave a rating of 4, indicating a slightly higher level of involvement (*Chart 3*).

Table 1. What do employees do to ensure that the Mokra Gora destination remains environmentally sustainable?

Sources: Authors, 2024.

Employees raise awareness about the importance of environmental preservation among visitors and the local population.

They actively collect waste and are dedicated to their work.

Their role depends on the sector in which they work: one sector is responsible for collecting and transporting waste from protected areas, another sector charges an environmental fee whose revenue is used for the sustainable development of the destination, while the third sector monitors construction to ensure it is adapted to the area and positively impacts the environment.

One of the questions was: What do employees do to ensure that the Mokra Gora destination remains environmentally sustainable? The question was open-ended, and the most common answers are presented *in Table 1*.

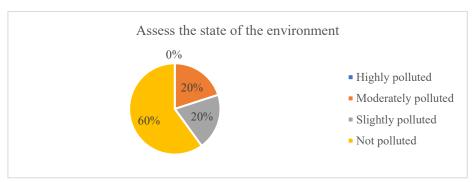


Chart 4. Assess the state of the environment. **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

In response to the question "Assess the state of the environment," the respondents answered as follows: The majority, that is, 18 respondents (60%), assessed that the environment is not polluted; six respondents (20%) believe it is moderately polluted, while another six respondents (20%) consider the environment to be slightly polluted. None of the respondents rated the environment as highly polluted (Chart 4).

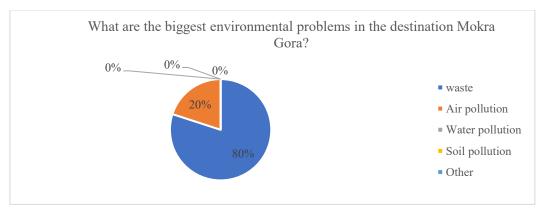


Chart 5. What are the biggest environmental problems in the destination "Mokra Gora"? **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

To the question: What are the biggest environmental problems in the destination "Mokra Gora"? respondents most frequently highlighted waste as the main ecological challenge – as many as 24 out of 30 respondents (80%) identified waste as the biggest problem. Additionally, 6 respondents (20%) recognized air pollution as a significant ecological challenge. None of the respondents singled out other types of pollution as particularly problematic (*Chart 5*).

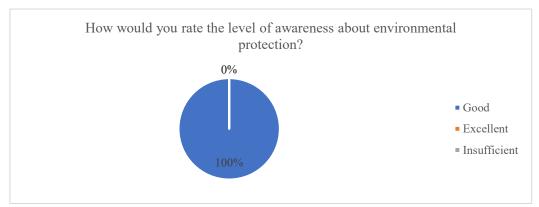


Chart 6. How would you rate the level of awareness about environmental protection? **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

To the question: How would you rate the level of awareness about environmental protection? all respondents, i.e., 100%, rated the awareness as good. No respondent chose the answers excellent or insufficient (*Chart 6*).

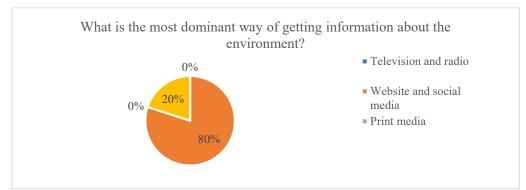


Chart 7. What is the most dominant way of getting information about the environment? **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

To the question: What is the most dominant way of getting information about the environment? the majority of respondents, namely 24 out of 30 (80%), stated that they most often get informed through websites and social media. The remaining 6 respondents (20%) reported that they receive information about the environment through other means of communication (*Chart 7*).

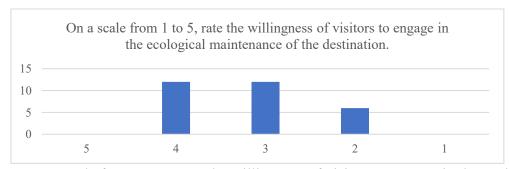


Chart 8. On a scale from 1 to 5, rate the willingness of visitors to engage in the ecological maintenance of the destination.

Sources: Authors, 2024.

To the question where respondents were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, the willingness of visitors to engage in the ecological maintenance of the destination, the following ratings were given: 12 respondents (40%) gave a rating of 4, another 40% of respondents (12 people) chose a rating of 3, and 6 respondents (20%) rated visitors' willingness with a 2. The research results showed that the majority of respondents perceive a moderate level of willingness among visitors to participate in ecological initiatives (*Chart 8*).

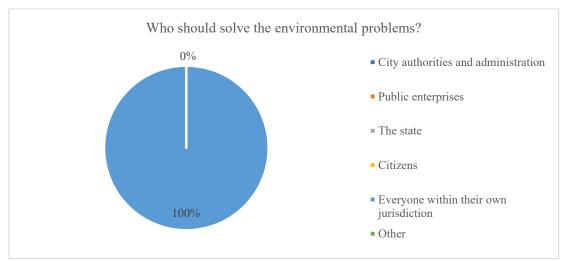


Chart 9. Who should solve the environmental problems? **Sources**: Authors, 2024.

To the question: Who should solve the environmental problems? All 30 respondents (100%) gave the same answer – that everyone should solve the problems within their own jurisdiction (*Chart 9*).

Table 2. What changes in business operations are necessary for the long-term ecological sustainability of the destination?

Sources: Authors, 2024.

It is necessary to raise awareness about the importance of ecology, both among employees and visitors.

There is a particular emphasis on the need for increased education and information about the importance of the environment.

The introduction of innovative solutions for waste recycling.

Strengthening human resources capacity, that is, forming larger teams of experts and workers who would systematically address environmental issues.

The last question was: What changes in business operations are necessary for the long-term ecological sustainability of the destination? The question was open-ended, and the most common answers are presented *in Table 2*.

4. PROPOSALS FOR MEASURES TO IMPROVE ECO-FRIENDLY PRACTICES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Environmentally responsible hotel management involves a range of activities aimed at reducing negative environmental impacts, including redesigning buildings, using smart heating and cooling systems, utilizing renewable energy sources, using energy-efficient appliances in kitchens and laundries, as well as for lighting and water heating, efficient water consumption, maintaining hygiene by using products free of hazardous chemicals, and promoting energy-efficient transportation options for guests and staff such as public transport, hybrid vehicles, and bicycles [11].

5. CONCLUSION

One of the successes of hotel operations lies in its sustainability and commitment to eco-friendly practices. The management of a tourist destination has the task of directing its operations towards a sustainable business system in order to achieve higher goals and preserve the environment. The case study in this paper was conducted in the area of Mokra Gora, near which the "Iver" hotel is located, a facility with potential for operating based on principles of environmentally sustainable practices. Employees expressed their views on the ecological aspects of business, and their awareness of the importance of sustainable operations also influences the awareness of visitors, who have the opportunity to learn about the significance and importance of environmental protection during their visit to this destination. Continuity in work and innovations based on ecological business principles bring numerous benefits to hotel facilities, the environment and the local community. The results of the survey indicate the necessity to raise awareness about the importance of sustainable development, educate employees and visitors, and introduce innovations in the field of waste recycling.

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СІР - Каталогизација у публикацији Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

6(082)(0.034.2) 5(082)(0.034.2) 331.45/.46(082)(0.034.2) 005(082)(0.034.2)

INTERNATIONAL Scientific and Professional Conference Politehnika (2025; Beograd) Conference Proceedings [Електронски извор] / International Scientific and

Professional Conference Politehnika 2025, Belgrade, 28th November 2025. -

Belgrade: The Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic, 2025 (Belgrade: The

Academy of Applied Studies Polytechnic). - 1 USB fleš memorija ; 1 x 2 x 5 cm

Sistemski zahtevi: Nisu navedeni. - Nasl. sa naslovne strane dokumenta. - Tiraž

400. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad.

ISBN 978-86-7498-146-7

- а) Техника -- Зборници b) Примењене науке -- Зборници v) Заштита на раду
- -- Зборници д) Менаџмент -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 180602633



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SBN-978-86-7498-146-7

