
THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY IN RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

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Abstract: Local communities around the world are increasingly looking for the ways to be more active in local government and participate in the managing of their local resources. For a region to become a destination for rural tourism and economic development, there must be structured network and collaborative agreements between public sector and private sector actors. The involvement of the community is a key part of tourism and policies decisions. If the decisions are not made in consultation with the local community during the project phase regarding tourism development in a region, the implementation will be impossible. It is much more vital to identify and involve key stakeholders in the project phase. By enabling the wide participation of different stakeholders in the decision-making process, including the local community, it enables the acquisition of new knowledge about other stakeholders, the acquisition of new skills and the exchange of brilliant ideas in rural tourism development and economic impact, which, in turn, fosters and understanding of regional problems and enables exploration of new and innovative solutions in rural tourism development. Rural tourism development is an important part of the economic development and incremental of the country economy in this case of the Peja region. Whether there is sufficient potential for rural tourism development we should evaluate the natural, cultural and socio-historical resources in that country. Peja region has very good opportunities for rural tourism development because it is a place with history, tradition and culture in tourism development, especially rural tourism, because it has many resources.

Keywords: Community, rural tourism, economic development, resources etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Peja region is recognized as one of the oldest cities in Kosovo and one of the oldest cities in Kosovo beautiful and richer with cultural-historical potential and rare natural beauty. Today tourism is emerging as a very important indicator of development and human civilization, it is a way of raising the level of culture, entertainment, healing and profitability. Rural tourism can be defined as the experience of a country which includes a wide range of activities that area or region. Rural tourism activities are important for the rural community to grow the business, which can bring income and employment to that community for the community. Rural tourism plays an important role in development, economically as it contributes to local development, job creation, development of declining industrial or rural areas. Rural tourism can be an important source of community jobs, not only does rural tourism provide business opportunities to locals, but it can also enhance the quality of local life. Rural tourism supports local culture in rural areas by encouraging the restoration of natural, cultural, and social historical sites. The community should ask the Municipality and Central Institutions for the development and organization of rural tourism in the Pejë / Pejes Region to support important policies, strategies and investments in rural tourism development by providing a more modern infrastructure. Any form of tourism that represents the rural life, art, culture or heritage of rural areas and thus contributes to the social and economic development of the rural community as well as enables interaction between tourists and local residents and enriches the tourist experience.

2. THE WAY OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRY

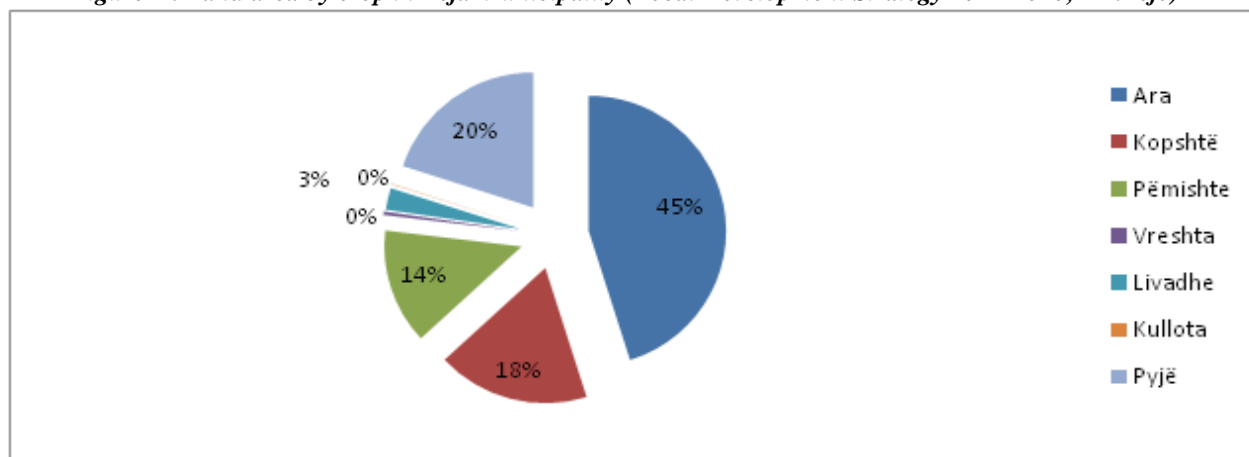
Tourism today is one of the largest industries in the world creating more jobs than most other sectors. Countries that are in the early stages of tourism development, such as Kosovo, have the potential to benefit from tourism, especially in reducing poverty and enhancing economic development. For tourism to thrive sustainably, public institutions must provide supportive legislation, an institutional framework conducive to private sector development, and guarantee quality assurance for tourists. This includes proper infrastructure, promotion of tourist potentials, good transport, visa facilitation and appropriate policies to stimulate demand growth. (Development of tourism through efficient policies and legislation, p.6 Pristina 2017). The mandate for tourism development in Kosovo is divided between the local and central level. However, central government has the actual authority as it has the largest budget and authority to draft laws and develop strategies. The central government is mandated, inter alia, to

create a favorable legal and institutional framework, facilitate and facilitate strategic investment, and coordinate stakeholder dialogue. (Development of tourism through efficient policies and legislation,p.7 Pristina 2017).

3. TOURIST ELEMENTS FOR RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

History, culture, tradition, natural resources, extension position, protected environment, fertile lands, etc., are these elements that identify the city of Peja as a tourist city, which is visited year-round by visitors from different countries. The town has a very old history and stands out in Kosovo as a tourist town. Even though the ruins have been covered and no archaeological research has been done, one can still begin with the story of the city of Peja lying in the Illyrian times (while the stones found can be seen in the ethnographic museum), then visit religious sites, such as mosques and orthodox cathedrals and churches, tekke, Haxhi Bey hamam, Haxhi Zeka mill, stone built Peja towers, old town houses, dress culture and old resident traditions, crafts etc. Apart from the cultural pilgrimage that Peja offers, it has great natural wealth, which surrounds it in the northwest and is only 1 km away from the city center. The largest assets are the mountainous region of Rugova where the Rugova Gorge, Lumbardhi, 1860 m high lakes, caves, numerous springs, as well as waterfalls along the gorge, rich flora and fauna, mountain peaks above 2000 m etc. are the most abundant. ., which are offered for use by visitors. One of the main attractions of the city of Peja is the 30 m long Drini Waterfall, which is visited year-round by numerous local and foreign visitors, which is part of the Albanian Alps mountain system. (K.K.Pejë , 2019). Peja today ranks among the most important economic, commercial and tourist centers of the country. Not only the city of Peja, but the whole district as a whole, has historically played a very important role in the economic development of the country.

Figure 1. Land area by crop in Peja Municipality (Local Development Strategy 2014-2020, KK.Pejë)



Source: Local Development Strategy -Peja 2014-2020

The municipality has drafted its Economic Development Strategy, within which the first priority is given to tourism development which will promote the development of other branches of the economy. Part of this strategy is the basket of projects identified by the panel of experts as the needs of the rural community of the Region.

Table 1. Number of visitors and overnight stays (domestic and foreign) by region, region, year and visitor / night.

2015		2016		2017	
Visitors	Nights	Visitors	Nights	Visitors	Nights
21707	33857	24110	32927	15419	27101

Source: <http://ask.rks-gov.net>.

As it can be seen from the data there is a movement of visitors year by year, but 2016 has a higher number of tourists and overnight stays in our country.

4. BASIC GOALS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN PEJA MUNICIPALITY

Renewal, complete revalorization, protection of tourist potentials and creation of new tourist image; Restructuring and modernization of the overall tourist offer; Selection and promotion of tourism development according to the

criteria of available spaces and their quality as natural resources; Establishment of ecological standards that will enable efficient protection of natural resources; Promoting the development of tourist regions with more favorable opportunities for maximizing the tourist season and increasing the capacity utilization of tourist offer capacity in the economic and social development of the community in the Peja Region. Peja has plenty of resources for rural tourism development and that can affect economic development throughout the region and also has the advantage of tourism development because the weather conditions are very good. Tourist planning and evaluation is related to space and time, mainly considering natural factors such as sun, air, goods, underground and surface waters, beautiful landscapes, as well as the values created by the society, as well as monuments. cultural - historical, artistic works, all of which are usable in the course of tourist values (F.Recica and B.Millaku ,Pristina 2014). Tourism products represent the potentials for tourism development, and as a result, economic development, which will have an impact on income generation and job creation. (Regional Tourism Strategy "West Economic Region" , 2016)

5. COMMUNITY AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE COUNTRY

Community participation is widely accepted as one of the goals and principles of tourism. Local communities form an integral part of the tourism development agenda (Jamal, T Stronza, A.2009). They represent the group of key tourism development actors (Ling, L., Jakpar, Sh., Johari, A., Myint, K., Rani, N. (2011) while also being considered as legitimate and moral actors in its development (Haukeland 2011), because their interests influence and are influenced by the decisions of key policy makers (Mccool, S. (2009). The extent to which local communities are involved in decision-making and various policy issues is determined by the extent to which they influence or are influenced by these decisions and policies. In the same way, Pongponrat (2011) noted that "development of local tourism requires that people who are influenced by tourism should be involved in both planning process and implementation of policies and action plans. This ensures that development meets the perceived needs of the local community". If decisions regarding tourism development in a region are not made in consultation with local communities during the design phase, it will be impossible for local communities to be involved in implementation. Whatever the circumstances, it is vital to identify and involve key stakeholders in the design phase.

6. TOURISM POTENTIALS THAT HAVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

Kosovo's cultural heritage is also very diverse. Small forts such as Albanian towers, mills and bridges, mosques and churches, Turkish baths, castles and archaeological sites all offer a rich history of the region.

Given Kosovo's natural and cultural assets, the segments as shown below currently represent the main pillars of the tourist offer:

- 1. Cultural Tourism:** With medieval artifacts included on the UNESCO list of cultural heritage, with a total of 41 archaeological sites of high importance, with a nightlife associated with diverse music scene, with an extraordinary hospitality of locals. Kosovo has a lot to offer in terms of cultural tourism.
- 2. Mountain and alpine tourism:** With winter resorts and for skiers like Rugova. Peja has the opportunity to strengthen and improve its position as a winter holiday destination. With the opportunity to provide tourist services and products throughout the four seasons of the year, Rugova has already only developed a significant number of tourist offers with tour operators.
- 3. Rural tourism, eco-tourism and alternative tourism:** This type of accommodation is currently part of the local and regional tourist offer.
- 4. Cross-border and regional visits:** In recent years, a considerable number of collaborations have been initiated with neighboring countries (Albania, Montenegro, Macedonia) which are generating an increase in the number of visits and visitors to Kosovo. Donor projects have been initiated to create a 'branding' of the 'Western Balkans' in relation to the so-called 'trekking' and 'haiking' activities.
- 5. Meetings and conferences:** Meetings and conferences can be considered as one of the most profitable segments of the current offering. In particular, seminars, conferences and trainings are currently the result of the presence of a large number of international organizations and various companies operating domestically. (MTI – Kosovo , 2019). These forms of tourism have a major economic impact on the local community, local institutions as well as at the central level as they generate budget revenues from local, regional and international tourists..

7. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tourism is increasingly being developed and evaluated as having a very important impact on the country's economy. Seeing the importance of tourism to the economy and its direct impact on social product and national income, the impact of tourism on the development of economic activities. Tourism in Kosovo is managed and overseen by the

Ministry of Trade and Industry, represented by a Division in the Department of Industry. The current administrative level of tourism in Kosovo is under-represented in this ministry, compared to the responsibilities and importance of the tourism sector for development and contribution to the country's economy.

Table 2: Government budget allocation for Ministry of Trade and Industry during the period 2015 – 2017

Year	2015	2016	2017
Allocation of RKS Government budget for MTI In (000)	4,730	4,557	7,966

Source: Institute GAP, Kosovo (2018) and adapted by the author.

According to available data, the Kosovo government spends less than 0.3% of the annual budget for the entire Ministry of Trade and Industry, where tourism is represented by a Division and their budget dedicated to the tourism sector is the lowest in the region. Division of Tourism (under MTI) and Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA - an agency that promotes and supports investment, exports, tourism, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMS 12 and special economic zones, also under MTI) have low financial support (less than 100,000 euros per year) for the development and promotion of this sector (Institute D4D ,2017).

Table 3: Budget allocated to cover the whole spectrum of tourism in Kosovo

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sum	60.000	70.000	70.000	40.000	30.000	30.000	30.000

Source: Quantitative Tourism Assessment Kosovo - Competitiveness in Southeast Europe (A Policy Perspective), 2018.

A fundamental challenge for tourism development in Kosovo is the lack of statistical data for the sector; therefore collecting this data is not easy and many other data sources are needed to bridge the gap and create an approximate figure of tourism statistics. Currently, there is no comprehensive statistical data on tourism in Kosovo regarding its economic impact on national GDP. Tourism-specific statistical data are not collected or mentioned in the reports of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, and the sole contribution of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) to the tourism sector is to report only on Hotel Statistics (Analysis of the current situation in the tourism sector in Kosovo 2018).

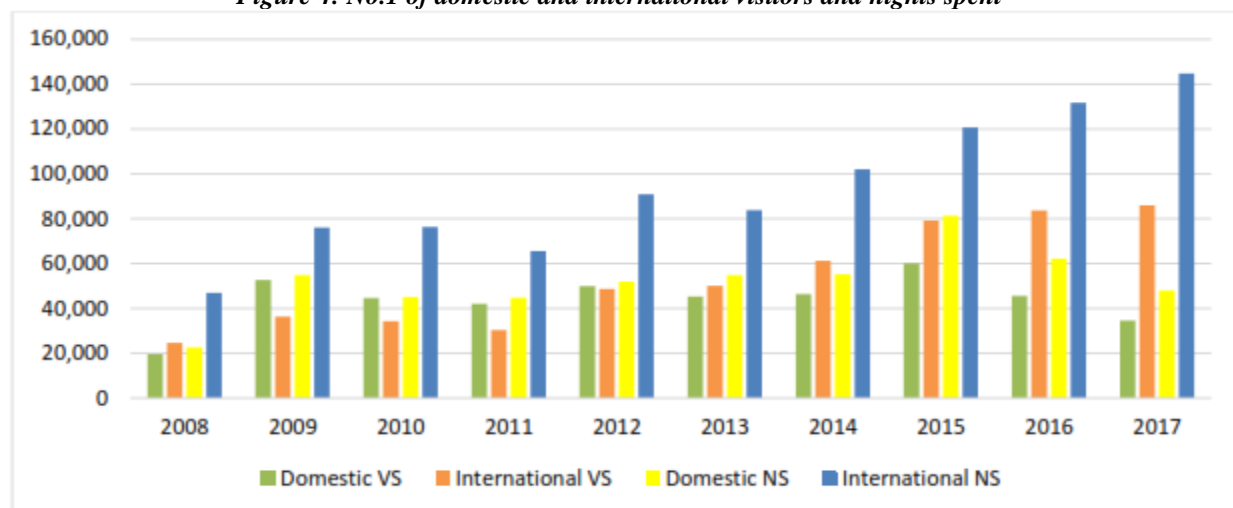
Figure 2-3: The restaurant in Radac area



Source: Photos by the author, B.K

One of the restaurants in Radac area which is frequented by many local and international visitors, there are traditional and European food, there are very good opportunities for rural tourism development and most of the employees are from that village and surroundings. the region benefits greatly from tourism, as there is the border with montenegro.

Figure 4: No.1 of domestic and international visitors and nights spent



Source: Analysis of the current situation in the tourism sector in Kosovo April,2018

The number of local visitors and their nights spent fluctuated between increasing and decreasing until 2014, and in 2015 reached the maximum number for the given time period. From 2015 - 2017 there is a significant decline in the domestic market, more than 24% year-on-year (VnV). On the other hand, international visitors have increased in number throughout the period, with the largest increase from 2015 - 2017, and the nights spent have also increased almost throughout the period, around 13% VnV.

8. CONCLUSION

Moreover, in addition to immediate priority interventions in the tourism sector, there are a number of other important elements that are directly or indirectly related to the performance of the tourism industry. Particular importance should be given by local government to capital management as the latter can and should be used for the development of tourist destination superstructure. Developing competitive and consequently successful destinations in which the principles of rural tourism are applied. Tourism policies need to be developed and implemented within a strategy supported by all rural actors. The local community should be more vocal in their demands to have a more active impact on responsible tourism development. Request more investment for tourism. Become a marketing strategy for development and promotion of tourism. Increase training for local institutions on forms of rural tourism development. Increase cooperation between local operators and other regions in the country. For the development of tourism in this region should also be given great importance in the development of tourism marketing, to promote as much as possible these natural, historical, artistic, traditional values so that this country is recognized as much as a tourist destination by locals, neighboring and international states.

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