

Peja Tourism Potentials, as Very Important Factors Acknowledged from the World Tourism Organization

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Abstract

Peja has considerable potentials for developing winter and summer tourism. Worldwide tourism is considered as one of the activities with dynamic development, since in general there is a market for it, with high demands always increasing, being in the same time source of income and employment. Nowadays is one of the strongest industries and as such it has a huge impact in economic and social development of many countries, especially those in development where it is being considered as one of the main income source, employment possibilities, economy diversification, environment protection and promotion of cross cultural exchanges. General characteristic of Peja position is that it lays on the North West part of fertile valley of Dukagjini, in front of the picturesque gorge, under the hills of Albanian Alps. The town is surrendered with mountains, part of the massive, the dynamics that involves whole western Balkan's. These mountains form a crown of peaks such as: Kopraniq peak (2460m), Zhlep mountain (2352 m), Hajla (2460 m) Mokra (1932m), Lumbardhi mountains, respectively Guri i Verdhë (2522m), Viellaku peak (2012m), Peklena, Hasani peak etc. Very convenient geographical position and the relief and climates attributes affected the habitation of these territories since the beginning of indo Europeanization of Balkans peninsula.

Keywords: Tourism, Environment, Potential, Albanian Alps, Mountains

1. Introduction

Peja lies on the western part of Republic of Kosovo and it is known as the second city in Kosovo from its territory of 603 km² and it has 130 000 inhabitants. Above sea level of Peja lies between 520 - 550, whereas highest peak is 2522 m (Pek of Guri i Kuq). Peja lies close to Albanian Alps (Cursed Mountains) and it is on border with Istog, Klina and Decani with municipal, whereas with state borders with Monte Negro and Albania. Reaching Peja city is quite easy having in consideration geographic good position and good road connection with all the cities in Kosovo and with Monte Negro.

The history, culture, tradition, natural wealth, its position, protected environment, fertile fields, etc. are elements that identify city of Peja as touristic city that it's being visited from different countries visitors. The city has an old history and it is being characterised in Kosovo as touristic city.

Except cultural journeys that offers, Peja has a huge natural wealth that surrounds the city in North West part it is situated only 1 km from the city centre. The biggest wealth consists of mountain region of Rugova, which is a part of the massive Cursed Mountains. The natural wealths that can be mentioned are: Rugova Gorge, Lumbardhi river, three lakes on the height of 1860m, caves, waters, flora and fauna, mountain peaks above 2000m, etc. that are being offered for visits.

Early development of this city has effected the cultural development and old traditions, by being passed in time to present. Traditional wearings is one the motifs that is being saved in original manner and it keeps being used even in present days. Its characterised with black and white colors at male wearing (clothes), whereas the feminine wearings are mostly red.

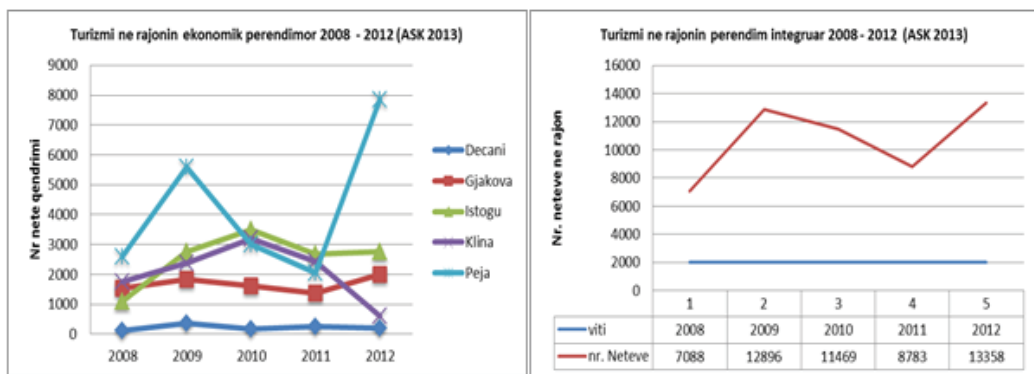
In Peja city and its surroundings there is a huge number of historic-cultural objects that express the culture and the tradition of this municipality from the time of Illyrs until present. There are many historic valuable objects, such as: stone kulla's, old houses, religious objects like mosques, catholic and orthodox churches, hamams, etc.

Municipality of Peja is known as ecologic town with more than 70% of its territory covered in green fields. It's the mountain region of Rugova that makes the biggest part of green fields, with more than 52% and in the same time it's known as the breeze of Peja city. There are attractions, natural and landscape wealths, starting from picturesque Rugova gorge, Lumbardhi River, three lakes on the height of 1860m, caves, waters, diversity of flora and fauna, mountain peaks above 2000m, etc. Also within the city almost in every corner there are oases that enrich the city, keep the fresh air and enable the relaxation of the inhabitants.

2. Tourism and touristic offers as promoters of economic development

Besides other economic sectors, the tourism and agriculture contribution in economic development in Peja municipality it's being considered strategic, consistable and tangible. Their importance is constantly increased based on the general trends and the lack of industry, which before 1999 was the main base for development in Peja. After the renovation, the tourism is ri active and makes a development promotor, facing all kind the challenges by making its mark in touristic zones in Peja municipality. Of course, it keeps importing most of the products and exports huge number of tourists comparing to the expected local and international tourists mostly during the summer season and few of them for winter sports .

Although, the number of the visitors its being increased constantly, as well the interst for cultural and natural tourism that provides Peja an competitive advantage. Whereas, the private capital investments (objects, accommodation) and the public investments in road infrastructure, the amount and the quality of services and accommodation are expanding. The role of tourism, independence how small scaled it is in economy, in family incomes and in employment in Peja municipality is an indicator of success in overall economy.

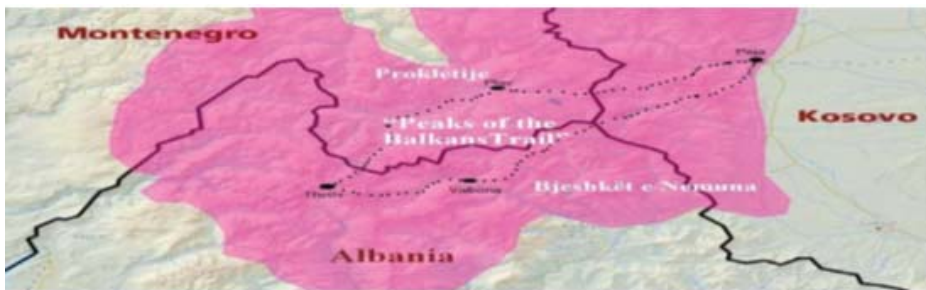


From the data presented, we conclude that the tourism trend measured with overnight stays of local and international tourists in western region (including municipalities of Peja, Decan, Junik, Istog, Klina and Gjakova) is in harmony with the national trends. This means that the number of tourist doubled, with peak increase in 2009, whereas in 2010 and 2011 due to different reasons the percentage decreased, whereas in 2012 the number of tourists was the highest in comparison with last four years.

In individual level, Peja municipality had the highest increase (triple) of the overnight stays in its hotels from local and international tourists in western region, and it is followed from Istog and Gjakova. Decan has a continuous frequency of the overnights, whereas Klina has a decrease from 2010 and onwards

Kosovo, with its cultural and natural diversity has sufficient potential for tourism development. The zone of border triangle Kosovo- Albania- Monte Negro is continuously becoming more and more attractive from all three governments and Iso from different donors. The zone of border triangle Kosovo- Albania- Monte Negro has an impressive nature and landscapes, a wide biological diversity and it is well known for the warm local hospitality. In the same time, the population of these parts is one of the poorests in the region.

The mountain tourism, such us hiking, biking or mountain climbing in recent years has become even more popular. It attracts foreign clients, especially those from nearby European markets. This consequently creates sustainable incomes for the living population in mountain zones and supports depopulation in this zones.



The overall idea is to do marketing to the mountain zones nearby the "Balkan Peaks" in the zone of border triangle Kosovo- Albania- Monte Negro as the only tourism destination. This way tourists can enjoy the combination of the specialties that each place provides: services, games, diversity of cultural places and beautiful landscapes. This way each destination is more attractive for foreign tourists.

3. Authentic sheltering forms

Along the natural beauties and the authentic sheltering forms that represent the regional specifics, they make a cultural attraction for tourists. In the same time they highlight the character of many paths. This causes that these old traditional buildings are often restored and offered as guesthouses. Along the traditional way of building, it has the authentic rooms with furnitures selected with a lot of taste (the furniture must not include plastic chairs etc). Often the furnitures are old and locally made out of wood and they give a special impression of the environment only by using small amount of means and lots of creativity.

Some examples from successful trail shelterings in world:



Mountain graze, sheperds cabin



Ex oil mills in Mallorca



Ex livestock farm

4. The regional potential

Sheltering forms in these countries differ that much as the development stage of these three destinations. And this diversification makes these trails so interesting. What is common in three mountain regions are the old traditional kullas made of stone, which are characteristic for these regions. It is exactly these kullas that need to be renovated and protected. A success story for added value and use of traditional kullas is the mountain village of Theth.

Except the kullas in Theth there are other sheltering forms available for tourists:

- Wooden houses in Valbona,
- Protecting cabins (Hikingclubs) and wooden houses in the surrounding mountains in Guisin and Plav,
- Ec lodge in Plav
- Wooden houses, Lodges and restaurants in Peja surrounding mountains



Guesthouse in Theth, Kulla



Lodge Rugova Mountains



Ecolodge in Plav

5. Services, service quality and tourist offer

Service quality: an important indicator for service quality and the additional qualities are the top up's for all touristic products. In general the visitors can enjoy their stay with small effort. Even the small enterprises can ensure a good service. Therefore, the private owners along the base quality services like clean rooms, good breakfast etc, can offer additional services such as facilitation of guides for the locality or for longer guides, offer travelling maps and distribute informative material for the region. Through a brochure they can attract their attention and share contact information, such as phone numbers etc. Recommendations for simple services must be well described in the services guide, already compiled. Additional touristic offer that can be offered for hiking trails can stimulate the interest for the region and bring additional visitors, like for example:

- Mountain guides (professional) that are able to guide in difficult zones and can offer first aid whenever needed. What are completely lacking are the travelling and mountain guides.
- Guides that offer interesting journeys with thematic background (culture, history, flora and fauna).
- In the aspect of Mountain bike tours, guides for mountainbikes, Mountainbikes rental, „Hike & Bike“ is well developed in Monte Negro and can be taken as an example in other regions.

In winter snow ski, snow tours, (this is very requested from tourists in Rugova Mountains).

Except having a good road selection and their highlighting a part of the base infrastructure are also the picturesque views, resting zones and protecting cabins.

These must be placed in certain distance (example every three hours). This can be implemented with very simple means, like for example with materials that can be found on the way, also already existing buildings can be used, like old cabins, food places etc. This principle is being well implemented in Kosovo.

Examples:



Protective cabins in Kosovo



Bridge made of regional materials in Kosovo



Picnic seats in Kosovo

6. Recommendations for further development of sheltering forms in the region

- Active support and reactivation of all kullas in the region.
- Jointly with kulla private owners must be combined with Bed-&-Breakfast concept, ensuring sufficient sheltering for travellers. Especially in Plav region traditional kullas must be reactivated because in comparison with other regions in Plav the traditional buildings are slightly replaced from the modern architecture.

- In Theth are already developed base standards for private sheltering that offer breakfast and partly other food also. It would be logical to further develop in a simple standard way regarding quality and services (for example minimal requests for traditional breakfast). And to compile a simple brochure or a quality guide (Visitors beginners book) that can be distributed to the visitors. For the private house owner's practical trainings should be offered. In long term, as for Theth and for the private houses to be build in future it is recommended to offer double rooms also except of single rooms in the way not to exclude groups of visitors, such as couples.
- A possible alternative for traditional forms of sheltering is camping. In Theth camping is being practised during the summer season.

There are two main variants:

- Camping with Service: Guest Houses with gardens or farms with Bed & Breakfast and sufficient land can offer camping with different services, but for this certain base standards must be placed or at least to be articulated simple recommendations, as for example:
 - Limited camper number for each guest house,
 - Services such as toilet use, breakfast, regional products offer etc,
 - Waste collection must be regular.
- No service Camping: for this part of itinerary for which momentarily no shelterings are offered, certain marked zones for camping can be set. Marking is important, in a way that in protecting zones no wild flora is present. It is relevant also to set „Do's & Don't's“: for example taking the waste with you etc. For such free zones for camping mostly are set certain parts of the trails and marked in the map. Increasing the ecological quality (supply and waste collection) in shelter points for example through the use of renewable energy (water heating system with solar energy in Theth). Continuous waste collection and waste water management are a topic for the future and needs improvement.
 - Support for the local architecture> to set base recommendations for new buildings Ecologde type – use of natural materials (wood, stone), local architecture for building elements, authentic style. This must be verified how much this is applied in building in local range. Authentic food, resting possibilities, regional products
 - A wide offer with typical regional products, prepared traditionally with regional products is another success factor in touristic product “Hiking Trail”. Production and distribution of regional products and development of regional trade marks have developed in special fields of economy in some touristic regions.

Theth concept of traditional cuisine, with traditional preparation in private houses is implemented completely. Visitors live together with family members and most of the products are produced from the house owners or the neighbours. This is a characteristic for the village charm and makes an attraction more for the travellers- an example that can be implemented in other shelters along the itinerary. In Kosovo also, in Rugova mountains, in guesthouses are offered traditional food and local treasures.

7. Recommendations for regional development

- If the region will be visited and the number of the visitors will increase, that a wider offer in gastronomy must be offered and in resting possibilities.
- Offering and selling of local products, that tourists can buy and take a way. This can be developed in long term (chestnut honey, forest honey, jams etc).
- In all three regions possibilities to rest along the travelin roads lack. In long roads there are neither resting places nor supply- buying places. A good possibility for this would be reactivation of mountain pastures and opening small shops in where vendor's products could be offered, (fruits, drinks, bread, and cheese).

8. Conclusion

Kosovo is well known for potentials for mountain tourism, national parks, hunting and cultural park. Along the resources the hotelery is concentrated in zones with touristic offers, urban centres and road with high importance in Kosovo. Kosovo has sufficient potentials for development of summer and winter tourism. Tourism is generally considered as one of the activities with dynamic development, since in general for tourism there is a market with high demands always are increasing, consequently making a income and employment source. Nowadays tourism is one of the massive phenomena worldwide. Although, the history of tourism development is not old, tourism had a dynamic of fast

development and included very fast many states and nations worldwide. The importance of tourism for the economy nowadays is very high. Touristic destinations worldwide are in fact the best indicators from which tourism affects economic activities.

Almost all parts of Kosova have touristic values in different forms and dimensions, independence form recourses and development scale. Physiognomy of attraction elements in Kosovo clearly leads you to mountain regions, in the direction of tourstic transtis, big cities, spa's, natural and cultural heritage, hunting localities and villages. Strating from actualities and trends foreseen for the needs of international tourism, real possibilities for lounching a real touristic offer in international market can be expected in regional centers in Kosova in high mountains, in the direction of theinternational road transit, in the complex of the natural heritage and high cultural values and most important hunting parts. The local touristic requests will further increase for the mountain and village tourism and tourism for the regions with natural and cultural heritage.

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