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Sustainable Development of Tourism in the Touristic Region of Peja

Sali Krasniqi*

PhD. student, St. Clement of Ohrid University of Bitola, Republic of Macedonia.

***Corresponding Author:**

Email: sali.krasniqi@hotmail.de

Abstract: *Tourism is one of the most complex activities of today's modern society in both, developed countries as well as in countries that are in transition or developing countries. Tourism is an important export product and a generator of employment and social welfare growth in general, and it is very significant in the economic development of a country. Tourism interweaves in itself experience and reports that are created during the travel time which result in benefits either in terms of economic, ecological, social, cultural, and educational welfare, through the natural beauties, the ancient culture of a nation or people (various monuments), or other natural or built attractions that awaken the curiosity of local or foreign visitors.*

The purpose of this paper is to study the development of tourism in Republic of Kosovo through which it intends to provide a modest contribution to bring the best models of sustainable development of tourism in the region of Peja, in particular.

Keywords: *Tourism, Development, Natural Resource, Visitors, Peja.*

INTRODUCTION

Today, tourism is becoming more and more important. Modern man mentions tourism in his daily life, often when he speaks of his/her annual leave, student holidays, end of year holidays, and so on. Thus, somehow one always thinks of tourism. Tourism is a "tool" by which people organize trips, meetings, various gatherings, etc.

The purpose of this paper is to provide information in the development of tourism in Kosovo and in the city of Peja, in particular, which requires a successful management and an inevitable marketing to be developed at all times, taking into consideration the challenges it has gone through, and create an idea that reflects the opportunities for the development of tourism.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the sustainable tourism model that will be provided by Kosovo Tour Operators through questionnaires, and additionally draw conclusions from the study of the current problems of tour operators in the region of Peja.

Methodology

The research work is mainly based on various books and through online resources, while the empirical aspect is based on a survey that was conducted with tourists in the Peja region during the summer season.

Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable development is not a new idea. As a concept, it has received an appreciation in all areas of today's modern society, starting from the political and public life that governs current policies for growth and development on a global perspective, as well as in national and local level. For the purpose of easier understanding of sustainable development, it is necessary to know how this idea has been developed. Swarbrooke considers the Roman Empire as the first reference to sustainability because the Romans focused on developing their cities and settlements in a planned and discreet manner with a vision to guide the expansion of their future (Swarbrooke, 2002).

Sustainability is a term that refers to the future. It is more than arrogant or excessive in the absence of empirical studies to talk about the future, while we cannot predict the present, or know what is the best for today or even tomorrow (Gorica & Kadiu, 2013).

According to WCED (1987), sustainability achieved through sustainable development strategies is a concept that gained real sense through the Brundtland Report. The concept of sustainable development arises from the belief that economic growth, even though is important to the community, has its own limitations (WCED, 1987).

But, according to Brundtland's report, the concept of sustainable development does not imply absolute limitations, but these are actually the constraints that are imposed by the current state of technology and social organization for environmental resources as well as the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. Human intelligence and the evolution of technological means should enable work within these constraints for the long-term survival of the environmental resources (Bramwell & Lane, 1993).

Tourism development must be carried out in such a way as to ensure; rational exploitation of the living resources, respect for cultural values, affirmation of authentic and specific values in certain areas, and the spirit and tradition of a country of great value to the domicile population. According Koja and Gorica (2007) in addition, it should be noted that the factors that influence and contribute to the development of tourism are as below:

- Life quality,
- The developed tourism economy,
- Protecting the environment and more rational use,
- Cooperation with local authorities,
- Minimizing negative effects, and
- Accomplishment of optimal touristic requirements (Koja & Gorica, 2007).

This activity, such as tourism, which has a great impact on many economic areas, either directly or indirectly, should be developed as an extremely well organized process, managed and coordinated in a professional manner by using mutually the resources that it owns, whether those be natural resources or human resources, in order to face the competitive tendencies or at least be part of the international market.

Sustainable Tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Land Council, as: "Sustainable tourism development that meets the needs of current tourists and host countries, while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future." It means managing all the resources in a way that all the needs such as: economic, social, and esthetic needs are met while preserving cultural integrity, basic ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems. Sustainable tourism products are those products that work in harmony with the environment, community and local culture so that they are beneficial and not victims of tourism development (Bakui, 2011).

The development and diversification of tourism products, along with a high level of satisfaction of tourists' requirements, help to attract tourists and increase their length of vacation. The tourism product may also include certain leisure activities, such as: hiking, sports, cultural visits, etc., in the context of promoting sustainable tourism (Adrian et al., 2010).

Sustainable development is defined in different ways by different thinkers. The most recognized and accepted definition up to now is: "Development that meets the needs of the present without harming the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Porritt, 2004).

In addition to expressing opinions on the concept of sustainable tourism by experts and various tourism institutions, they began to apply sustainable development in the planning and development of tourism product, product distribution and tourism services, pricing policy, and promotion of tourism product through certain marketing programs. These activities were implemented through various principles of sustainable development.

In today's contemporary tourism literature, as there are many definitions for the term of sustainable tourism, there are also different views over the principles of sustainable tourism, which are focused on tourism resource management, community co-operation, etc., in order to increase the economic welfare of society, the preservation of resources and equity in the distribution of costs and benefits that arise; ensuring freedom, and satisfying the needs of tourists.

For the principles of sustainable tourism, Briassoulis says: "All principles are important for the development of sustainable tourism, if one is not accepted, the sustainability of a development is at stake" (Briassoulis, 2002).

Tourism involves many aspects of work affecting the actors of a destination. However, to make tourism a major factor in the development of a destination, joint work of all institutions is required because the development of tourism in a destination is not only of economic importance, but also a long-term development of the municipality or community (Mustafa & Bajrami, 2012).

- **The determinants of tourism development**

For tourism development factors, Vjollca Bakiu, says: "The resources available to a country for tourism development, also known as tourism potentials of a country, are the determining factors for the "production" of the union of products or touristic services that can give the name to some places or areas as touristic destinations. These factors are: natural resources; historical, artistic and cultural assets, human resources, resources in capital and infrastructure. Depending on the use and good management of a country's resources, the positioning of the global tourism market can be explained in accordance with the best models of their development and management².

Factors affecting the sustainable development of tourism or quality growth (which imply a rise in the quality of life, economic prosperity and the growth of a sense of subjective prosperity) that can be realized by using fewer unimpeachable resources that also need to be followed by a decrease in human life pressure in the living environment, consist of the following components:

- Maintain the living environment rationally,
- Safety in the general aspect (both physical and economical),
- Better affirmation of social integrity,
- Respecting the dignity of cultural characteristics of the local population,
- Optimal coverage of tourist needs, and
- Creating profit

I think that the quality of the living environment, social integrity and cultural identity is a good basis for a successful development of tourism activities which, based on sustainable development, should contribute to self-affirmation, while meeting the criteria of economic and tourism needs. Social integrity should be evaluated in terms of subjective prosperity of local dominant population. Cultural integrity should be inspired

in terms of the development of cultural values and beauties, while the quality of the living environment is assessed from the standpoint of some elements such as: water, air, biodiversity, quality of landscapes, etc.

- **Natural factors as tourist motifs**

Natural tourism factors are created naturally and reflect the geographic environment of a country. Natural beauties, climatic conditions, thermo-mineral waters, caves, geomorphologic and geological forms, flora and fauna represent the first tourist resource that has its own valuation in tourism and serves as the basis for a country's tourism development. Location, topography, climate and other factors are carriers of water affluence, waterfalls, and narrow deep gorges. Kosovo has good opportunities for tourism development. It possesses prosperous natural attractions with convenient geographic locations. Some of its special tourist attractions are: distinctive morphological features, hydro-graphic, climatic and other attractive features that make Kosovo one of the most attractive tourist areas in the region. In addition to the possibility of establishing tourist centers for the development of other tourist forms, the following should be considered: Rugova Gorge, which with its rare attractions presents a special attraction, Shala e Bajgores, offering very good conditions for the development of certain types of tourism, then the spring of Drini i Bardhë, the natural lakes, Gadime Cave, Radac Cave, Cave at Rugova Gorge, Panorc Cave, Petreshtica Cave, Bresalc Cave, etc. From the other attractions, Mirusha Waterfalls and Bifurcation at Nerodime River should be distinguished. Thermo-mineral springs providing touristic opportunities are: Peja Bath, Bath of Klllokot, and Mitrovica Bath, as well as other thermal springs, in which the capacities needed for the reception of tourist clients have not been built yet. The health qualities of these thermal waters can be compared to the most popular baths in the region. Among the most important natural factors that enable the development of tourism in Kosovo are: the geographical position which enables favorable access to the regional tourism market and beyond, favorable climate conditions, mountain terrain which is hilly and rugged and rich in variety of flora and fauna, nature and ecology with favorable conditions for the development of green tourism, as well as other tourist attractions such as caves, gorges, cantons, rivers, lakes and so on (Gashi, 1988).

- **A sustainable development model based on eco-tourism**

Environment-tourism relations have taken an important place in the studies of the last 50 years. During the 1960s, mass tourism was associated with raising public awareness of environmental issues, embodied by environmental impact studies. Since 1973, the environment-tourism debate gained a spotlight where the states met in Copenhagen at a conference called "Tourism and Conservation". From the analysis of positive and negative factors for the interdependent tourism-environment relationship, it turned out that: the environment is the indispensable base and the greatest attraction for tourism. Without an attractive environment, there would be no tourism. Tourism interests require the protection of historic assets. Tourism directly promotes active conservation and encourages people to contribute to conservation. Tourism is a major threat to the environment (Meeting for Tourism in Copenhagen, 1973).

From various studies done at different times, it has been concluded that co-habitation of environment-tourism is not compatible and that tourism is the cause of conflict, but there are circumstances where both elements can coexist for their mutual benefit. To protect and maintain the quality of the environment of the regions, the US sponsored a Mediterranean plan and a Regional Marine Program that created a number of development strategies for the following purpose: Land use for a variety of purposes ranging from environmental protection to the development of tourism; promoting the distribution of tourists and developing the internal areas for their use; encouraging locals for other forms of accommodation; sleek holidays, in order to lengthen the tourist season and reduce the concentration of tourists; establishing laws on environmental protection and tourism development; and establishing a "code of conduct" for tourism, applicable for both, the tourists and to the tourism industry. From the many studies that have been done on tourism, eco-tourism has emerged as a field of study, showing the link of tourism with ecological forms of tourism in the cleanest form. Eco tourism means natural tourism, adventure tourism, convenient tourism, responsible tourism, non-massive tourism, and many other external forms of tourism, in other words, it is an inclusive term like an

umbrella, serving for a long-term range of environmental terms related to tourism. Many other definitions are provided for eco-tourism. Popular eco-tourism involves the transportation of a large number of visitors around a well-known place and popular touristic spots. It requires high-capacity transport vehicles such as: buses and other means of transportation for which infrastructure and physical skills are required.

The attractive natural resources of the most developed forms of alternative tourism, i.e. eco-tourism, are natural or semi natural systems. Thus, sustainable eco-tourism should be based on the principles of ecosystem structures. Tourism development should be aimed at preserving and supporting the local population's income, as well as assessing historical structures. Planning and designing tourism development must be competitive across different localities. Tourism control should remain to a considerable extent depending on the locality. This control, as well as the provision of benefits, should be distributed by the relevant community and consequently the benefits should be combined with environmental conservation; tourism investments should support the local economy and ensure a distribution of activities, minimizing negative impacts on the environment; and the tourism industry should actively help in achieving a full potential understanding between the local population and the tourists (Gorica & Kadiu, 2013).

Empirical Analyses

The necessary data relevant to the thesis proposed for this diploma work is provided. In the conducted surveys, eighty surveyors have provided the necessary answers which were processed in percentage. The survey was conducted near the city center in Peja and the city's information office. The timeframe for conducting the survey as tourist visited the Albanian Alps in our country was 1 month. Below the data obtained during this survey are presented in percentages and through diagrams.

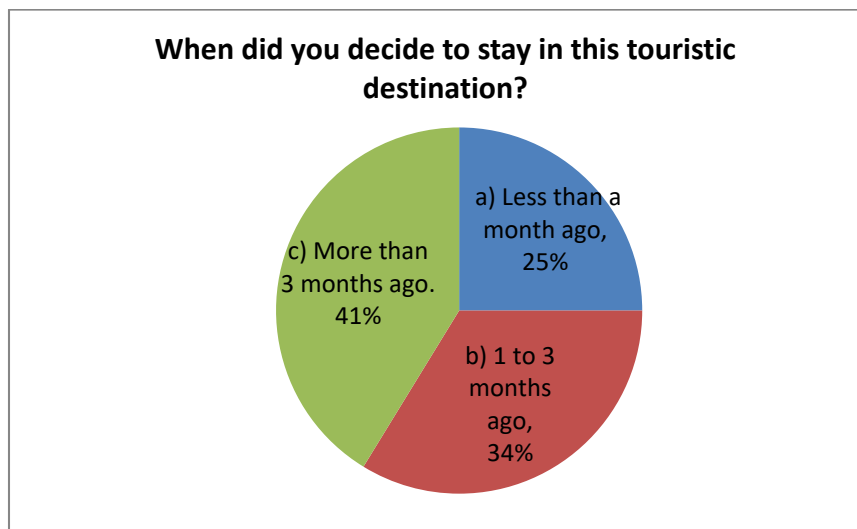


Figure 1: 1st Diagram. The obtained data regarding the timeframe of decision to visit the relevant destination

Through the question in the first diagram regarding the timeframe of decision to visit the relevant destination the answers are shown in percentages. In this question, 25% of tourists have decided on vacation less than a month ago, 34% of tourists have taken their vacation decisions from 1 to 3 months ago, and 41% of tourists have made their decisions more than 3 months ago.



Figure 2: 2nd Diagram. The obtained data regarding the trip company

This question in the second diagram explored how the tourists arrived in Kosovo (in the touristic destination of the Albanian Alps). It was noted that most of the tourists have traveled with their families 35%, travelling in couple 28%, and 19% travelling alone. Supposedly, it was claimed that organized group trips to be find the most, but the results showed that actually the situation is different, only 18% from the respondents answered that they came with organized trips.

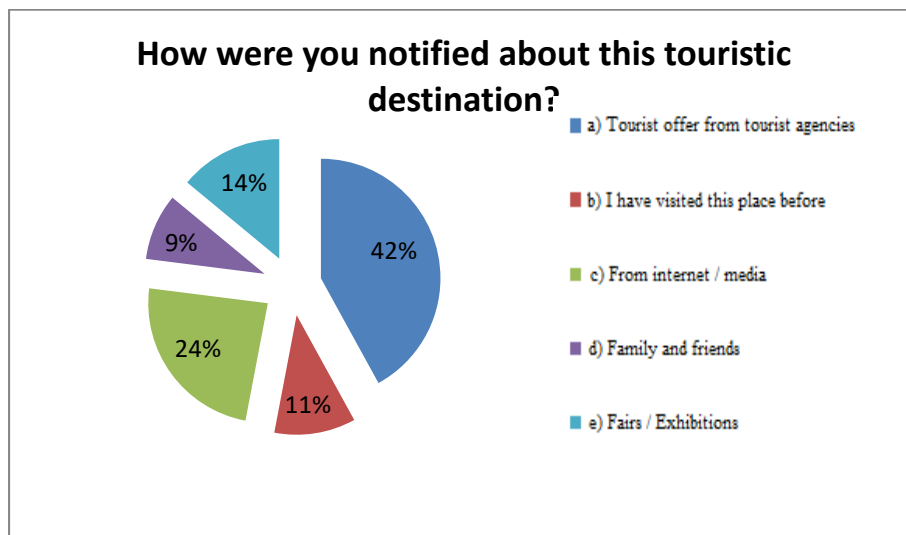


Figure 3: 3rd Diagram. The obtained data with regard to getting notified about the destination

The third question on the questionnaire was: How were you notified about this touristic destination? The responses gathered are as below: 11% of tourists have stated that they have visited this destination before, 24% of respondents have been informed through the internet / media, 9% of tourists have been notified by friends and relatives, 14% tourists were informed through fairs / exhibitions, and 42% of tourists were informed through tourist offers from touristic agencies.

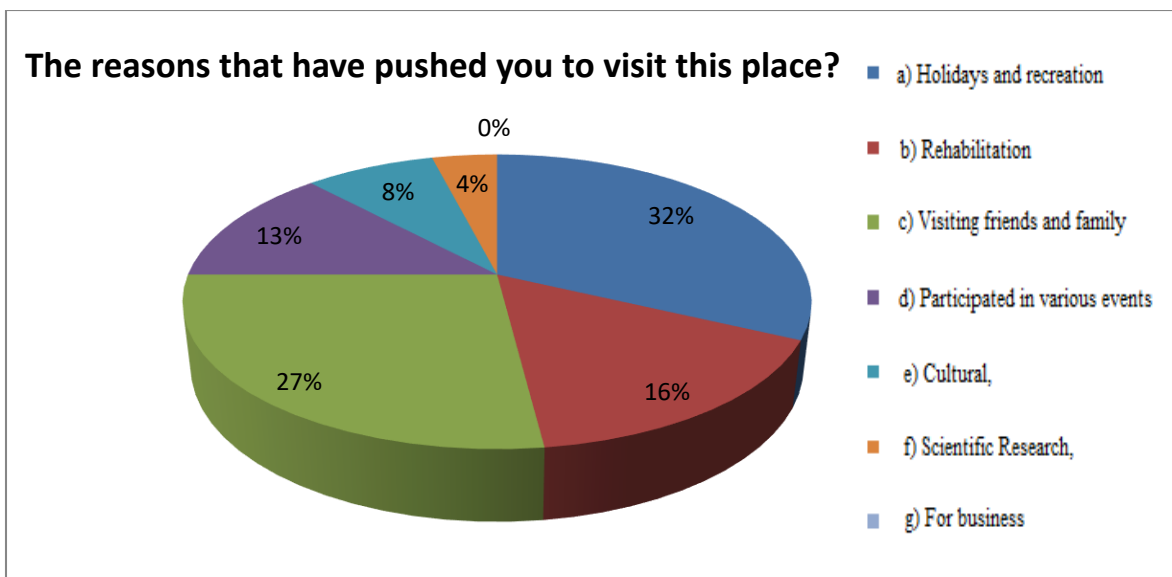


Figure 4: 4th Diagram. The obtained data with regard to the reasons for visiting the place

The fourth question on the questionnaire was about the main reasons that have encouraged tourists to visit this touristic destination? From all the surveyed tourists, 32% of them had come for vacation and recreation, 16% of respondents said they came for rehabilitation, 27% claimed to have come to visit relatives and friends, 13% of tourists to attend various events, and 8% of tourists for cultural reasons. While none of the tourists had come to develop business.

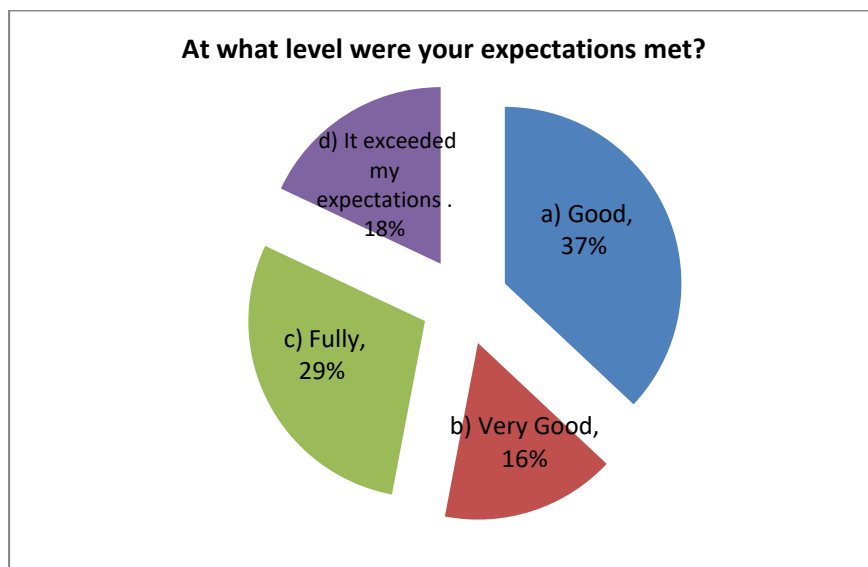


Figure 5: 5th Diagram. The obtained data regarding the level at which the expectations were met

To answer the requirements of tourists, in the 5th diagram, the following question was asked: At what level were your expectations met? 37% answered 'good', 16% responded 'very well', 29% of tourists declared 'fully satisfied', and 18% of tourists claimed that it exceeded their expectations.

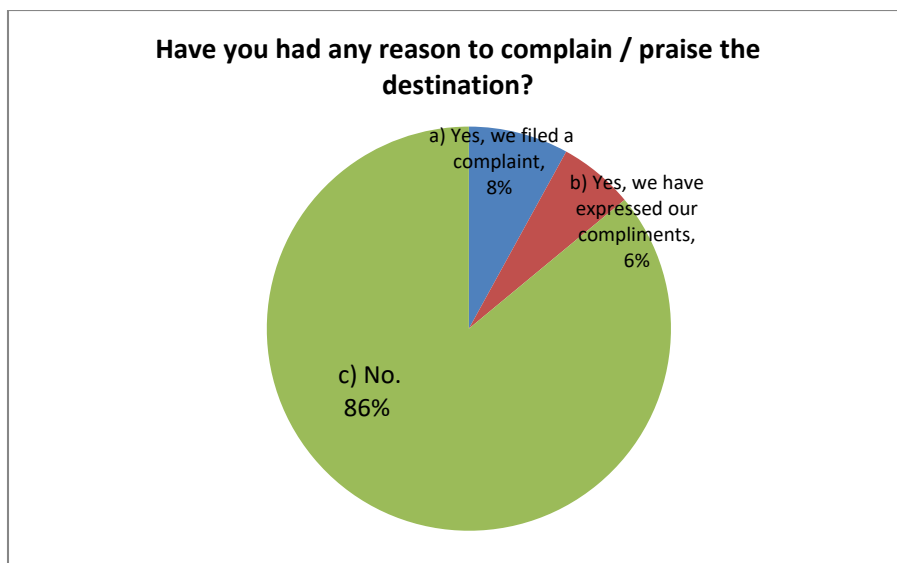


Figure 6: 6th Diagram. The obtained data regarding the complaint-praise reasons (if any)

The sixth question of the questionnaire was: did you have any reason to complain or praise your destination? And the following responses were received: 8% of tourists declared with the answer Yes, who have also filed a complaint, 6% of them declared with yes and have given their compliments, while, 86% of respondents stated that they did not have any complaints or did not give their compliments.

Conclusions

The touristic region of Peja with its own touristic resources such as space and geographic position, should draft its touristic policies at the central and local level putting more emphasized treatment in order to be in the function of sustainable tourism development.

The touristic resources of the natural heritage of this region are not yet in function to bring tourism development and are far from a sustainable development. It is therefore the duty and responsibility of the relevant authorities that these resources are in the function and bring sustainable tourism development.

The natural touristic attractions of the region should be an integral part of the region's touristic offer, as a complete tourist destination with a diversified offer for its visitors.

The private sector, due to insufficient public sector support and lack of involvement in drafting strategic documents, despite the investments made, is not sufficiently oriented to sustainable tourism development.

Regarding accommodation capacities, based on the touristic resources that the region has, there is still a lot to do to achieve the desired results. Lack of genuine tourist policy for tourism development is a deterrent to the development of tourism. Tour operators while adapting to the surrounding environment, think that their business does not develop in accordance with the surrounding environment.

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