

DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM BUSINESSES IN THE WESTERN PART OF KOSOVO AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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Abstract: The western part of Kosovo is of particular importance for the development of tourism activities, giving importance to environmental protection. The tourist area in the western part of Kosovo is visited by local and foreign tourists in all four seasons of the year. Tourist attractions and beautiful nature are attractive tourist offers to visit at any time. This area is made special by the National Park (Albanian Alps) in which the attractive part of the tourist destinations lies, which are at the service of tourists. The environment and tourism are closely linked. A sustainable environment also creates sustainable tourism. Its development in many countries of the world affects water pollution. Therefore, preserving and caring for the environment is an important basis for the development of human society. Global institutions, national governments and local communities are also increasingly concerned about the future of the environment by embracing the concept of "sustainable development". Tourism is considered one of the important industries that creates major environmental pollution in many different areas and countries. It plays an important role in reducing the level of poverty among different communities, especially those in tourist destinations such as the Tourist Zone in the Western Part of Kosovo.

Keywords: Tourism, Western Kosovo, Tourist Attractions, National Park etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid globalization and communication, planning for a healthy and secure environment is a condition for sustainability and for the entire community. Global institutions, national governments and local communities are also increasingly concerned about the future of the environment by embracing the concept of "sustainable development". The natural resources of the Rugova Mountains determine their recreational and economic functioning; the ecology of natural structures can be obtained. as a sound basis for the qualitative and quantitative expansion of activities that are in the function of tourism and for the maintenance and performance of this natural environment (Hasanaj & Kuqi 2022). This study examines theoretical and empirical studies by tourism researchers and explores the work done). Environmentally friendly behavior in other disciplines (Dolnicar et al., 2008). The country possesses, whether underground or above ground (Kuqi & Selimaj 2022). In this way, the soil lungs wrinkled and degraded, as well as lands that have been lost by excessive vegetable deforestation and coverage in the cultivated soil. The mental and physical health of the population is directly related to the quality of the "different environments", whose elements from home to work Honor operate internationally. This tool offers some advantages in situations when the researcher is interested in evaluating a large number of decision factors, to exceed the importance of each factor affecting the decision, to handle factors that differ in their subjectivity and objectivity, and to engage large groups of decision -participants to operate a decision or to evaluate how participants' subgroups change in 2005). On the other hand, the main problem is largely based on the fact that human progress in most cases affects the environment. The quality of the environment, both natural and created by Kuqi B & Selimaj A, 2023) is essential for tourism, such as the construction of general infrastructure such as tourist roads and facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants and shops. "Tourism is a key element of a successful industry, tourism is the ability to recognize and address changes in a wide range of key factors and know how they act" (Dweyer et al. 2009). They can damage tourism, especially at various tourist destinations. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the nature and main characteristics of tourist experiences for the benefit of the overall understanding of the tourist experience processes (Aho & S.K. 2001). Tourism, as one of the fastest growing industries, is one of the leading contributors to the greenhouse effect. Climate change and its potentially essential influences on tourism worldwide are an urgent issue. As the experience of developed countries shows, high quality economic growth must be associated with capital accumulation and structural changes in the economy (Simkiv, et al., 2021). Traveling leisure significantly increases waste due to the transport used during people's vacation, indicating that tracking economic growth comes with a significant carbon load, as tourism is significantly more intense with carbon and waste than other sectors of potential economic development (Kuqi B. 2018). Because tourism is growing and developing more and more today. Environmental protection is one of the priorities today and in the future (Dreshaj et al. 2022).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is about the basic concepts that this tourist area offers, environmental-tourism relations in Rugove and the prospect of their development for tourists. Tourism management should focus on managing and combining the interaction of parties: employees, clients and physical structure, to achieve organizational objectives (Griffin R. W: 2011). It should be seen how this environment-tourist relationship should be strengthened for tourism and economic development. An evaluation system can help tourists choose destinations, increase their pleasure, and encourage them to act responsibly (Deng, et al., 2002). There is therefore good management of the tourist area, "Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of land ecosystems, sustainable forest administration, fight against desertion and prohibition and return of land degradation and prohibition of biodiversity loss. This is followed by a section discussing their data and resources (Huber's, T. & Bennett, J. 2003). In this paper the collection of data is mainly done using notes issued by hotel and tourism statistics at the Kosovo Statistical Agency and from researching the project for the design of businesses in the Dukagjini Plain (western part of Kosovo) from "Haxhi Zeka" University Peja as well as by survey samples from the area.

3. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

In the region, it is characterized by continuously deteriorating, with waste pollution, degradation forests, eroded rivers, polluted and water loss, destination and parcel of agricultural land, wild construction as restaurants, etc. Nearby even inside the natural protected areas, near rivers and other watercourses, polluting and endangering the living life in them as well as the pollution of agricultural land and vegetable fruits from irrigation with these polluted waters that also affect the health of humans and animals. An increasing phenomenon is the lack of spatial, environmental, technical, construction, etc. plans and standards. Another characteristic is the lack of sustainable treatment and management of family waste, sewage and industrial waste as well as inert waste including limited recycling through some private initiatives such as scrap metal, plastic, etc. and sending abroad for recycling. In Gjakova alone there is a small plastic recycling company that turns it into plastic pipes.

The substantive change of environmental status remains a prerequisite for tourism development and overall socio-economic development, attracting investments and tourists. Moreover, the environment is one of the strong factors in human security and the image of the region as a country with vision and long-term attractive plans to live, work, invest and relax.

Natural heritage in the western region

The natural heritage of western Kosovo consists of hilly mountainous areas of the Nemuna Mountains and the Dukagjini Plain. The nature of the region is diverse, highly competitive in the country and the region and with opportunities for the development of mountain, sporting-recreation summer and winter tourism, and rehabilitation.

Within the natural heritage they also entered;

The largest National Park in Kosovo "Bjeshkët e Nemuna" (62,488Ha) inside which is the highest peak in Kosovo "Gjeravica" (2656m), the only forest park in Kosovo "Decani pines" (15ha) and Rugova Canyon (43ha)- Natural Monument. Inside the park there are also 4 natural reserves and a natural monument;

Natural Monument "The Burim of White Drin with the Radac Waterfall and Cave" protected by complex adjacent to the BN park.

Kosovo second regional park in Kosovo "Mirusha Canyon" (555ha) with 13 lakes and 12 picturesque waterfalls and some caves;

Natural Monument "Banja e Peja" The most qualitative thermal source in Kosovo;

"Source of Istog" - the cleanest river in Kosovo;

Radoniqi Artificial Lake in Kosovo with an area of 5.62 km²;

27 natural monuments throughout the region (3 sources of mineral water, 2 natural water sources, 2 canyons, a different number of trunks;

The region is part of the White Drin Basin with 6 of the 9 main rivers that make up it: River Burimi of Istog, Peja Lumbardhi (Bistrica), Mirusha River Klina, Decan Lumbardhi, and Erenik River. The region is rich in caves such as Radac (1,420m), Princess, Great Gorge (13,450m) in the Rugova Canyon, Shower (500m) in exploration, Zatriqi, Mirusha, etc. expect to be explored, provided with infrastructure and signaling. Other high mountains in the region are the Red Stone and the peak of Matjash (2530m), the peak of Rupe (2500m), the peak of the dog and Hajla (2400m), the peak of Strelc (237m), Rrasa Zogu (2300m), Zhlebi, Istog Mountains, etc.

Principles for sustainable tourism in the western part of Kosovo

A series of principles for sustainable natural tourism in harmony and in the function of nature, applicable to tourism in the western region are:

- ✓ Natural values are preserved and nature conservation is promoted;
- ✓ As little as possible the pressure on the environment;

- ✓ Local traditions and cultures are respected;
- ✓ Visitors increase understanding and appreciation for nature and culture;
- ✓ Improved Improved infrastructure is offered to visitors;
- ✓ Visitors are encouraged to enjoy mental and physical recreation;
- ✓ Economics, products and local employment are promoted;
- ✓ Proming Promotion materials are carefully prepared and published;
- ✓ Tourist activities are planned and organized in cooperation as well as

Imi Determining indicators and monitoring the development of the tourist industry and avoiding capacity overcoming are the protectors of the beautiful nature of this area.

Tourist capacities in the service of tourism development in the western region

This research is presented in a table and graphically the data obtained from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics and the research from the terrain, which were analyzed and processed to achieve the desired results. Below are the accommodation units in the western part of Kosovo, their number which are in the service of tourist activities. The data for the period 2019-2023 are presented according to which it is clearly seen that we have a significant number of accommodation objects. Their number ranges from 92 in 2019 to 99 in 2023, which means that the western part of Kosovo, although there are great tourist potentials, and there is an increase in them, the number of accommodation facilities is still small where it is also verified through the design by Haxhi Zeka University in Peja, which means that the needs are greater for the units. This is seen from the table and graph below.

Table 2 Number of accodimation units in the western region of Kosovo, in the years 2019 – 2023

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Accommodation unit	Accommodation unit	Accommodation unit	Accommodation unit	Accommodation unit
92	92	93	93	99

Source: ASK 2025

In the table and graph no. 2 The number of accommodation units is shown by 2019-2023 where we see that we have an increase, but it is not sufficient number. Here we see the growth from 2019 to 1235 to 2023 in 1746. As in accommodation units that should be more numerous, so the number of rooms is not satisfactory and should be added in order to have as many visitors as possible at this destination.

Table 3 Number of rooms in accommodation units in the western region of Kosovo 2019-2023

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Room	Room	Room	Room	Room
1 235	1 235	1 235	1 235	1 746

Source: ASK 2025

In the table and graph no. 6, the number of external visitors and their attitudes is presented. Also here is the 2019-2023 period, where there is a gradual increase in visitors from year to year, such as In 2019 we had 27438 visitors while in 2023 it reached the number up to 67333 visitors. Also the number of Net attitudes has increased significantly.

Table 7 Number of foreign visitors and their nights of stay in western Kosovo 2019-2023

Years	Visitors	Night
2023	67 333	250 654
2022	42 594	121 212
2021	33 646	79 452
2020	14 242	34 453
2019	27 438	75095

Source: ASK 2025

4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was tourism increase indicators in the western region of Kosovo. These areas are amazed by the magnificent views, many types of plants, and their value in money, past history, and culture for the people who live there and beyond. The general wealth of the Mountain, mainly the water at the top (not forgetting the wood and the old culture), makes these hills a rich natural gift. At the same time, they are a key source for the economic growth of the western part of Kosovo. However, we need to work more with smarter and more sustainable ways to maintain and increase the value and full health of this place, for the future of the area. High hills, full of water, green fields, and trees. These hills have great value and can be used all year round. For cold, warm, and healthy trips. Here in this group of hills, we have many new travel points that work for trips, such as Belleja, Mountain of Beleg (for skiing), Roshkodoli, and others. Also, the waters from our hills are key for the people and the land. They help with water energy (4 water points), for drinking and domestic use (water goes to about 40,000 people in Deçan and most of Gjakova), entertainment – the view and walk of Lumbardh in Deçan, irrigation of agricultural lands throughout the western part. Trees, plants, and other things have value for the people living nearby. But the condition of some mountains is poor due to illegal constructions of wild use and damage to river beds. Thus, we need strong steps to keep the forests safe and to ensure that they are useful for those who come after us.

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