

## TOURISM AS AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KAMENICA

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**Abstract:** Tourism is nowadays an essential factor with a major impact on a country's development. It is also one of the most profitable and influential sectors of the economy, with a strong growth trend in the future, particularly in terms of creating new jobs and generating financial revenues.

It can be considered that, not only in tourism in the Municipality of Kamenica but throughout Kosovo, the main problems lie in the lack of appropriate strategies, the absence of clear priorities in the field of tourism, the lack of a clear definition of tourism, the employment of unqualified staff in the development of tourism products, and the lack of an appropriate concept and approach to sustainable tourism development in the absence of adequate marketing strategies.

In this paper, I will provide a brief overview by presenting the natural resources and characteristics, potentials, factors, geographical position, and infrastructure as prerequisites for the development of the Municipality of Kamenica, as well as other elements that may positively affect economic development and increased budget revenues. The paper also aims to contribute to scientific knowledge by facilitating access to and identification of tourism destinations in general.

**Keywords:** Tourism, tourism planning, Kamenica, marketing planning and implementation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most widespread phenomena in modern society and is closely related to fulfilling people's needs for rest and recreation. Although Kosovo possesses numerous advantages, it still cannot be said to have a significant tourism reputation, considering the political events of earlier periods, which have considerably hindered, in many respects, the stimulation, promotion, planning, and implementation of marketing related to the potential for economic development and increased budget revenues, including the incorporation of hospitality facilities into the system, mountain tourism (ski resorts), capital investments, cultural-historical and archaeological development, etc. The Municipality of Kamenica possesses diverse conditions and characteristics for tourism development, especially mountain tourism. It has rich natural and geographical attractions with many advantages for the development of alternative tourism that distinguish it from other municipalities. Considering the richness reflected in cultural and historical monuments, there are fundamental prerequisites for the development of cultural tourism. The municipal authorities acknowledge that they have failed to establish a tourism sector. Officials of this municipality state that this has occurred because of unclear policies concerning the development of many sectors, even though the municipality has growing potential, especially in mountain tourism, but also in archaeology. The development of the tourism sector would generate revenues and contribute to reducing unemployment; however, damaged infrastructure and a lack of investment have caused this sector to remain underdeveloped.

Kamenica is visited mostly during the summer months, when people who left the area long ago return to their homes and properties for rest and recreation. Improvement of road infrastructure, opening of borders for free travel with neighboring countries, improvement of the quality of restaurants along the roads, etc., are needed. Tourist sites and buildings located along the roads would benefit from transit tourism by promoting Kamenica as a tourist destination and improving economic opportunities for citizens living in this municipality.

### 2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this paper, I will attempt to provide a brief summary presenting the resources, potentials, factors, geographical position, infrastructure, and many other elements that may be considered prerequisites for tourism development in the Municipality of Kamenica. I will also contribute to the field of science by facilitating access to and identification of tourist sites within the territory of the Municipality, providing a critical assessment and drawing conclusions and recommendations regarding the best alternative for developing tourism enterprises in the Municipality of Kamenica. The main objectives of this study are: to become a respected competitor in the region and beyond; to develop a long-term strategy for tourism development according to European models; to establish an information and marketing center within the Municipality; to create an attractive environment for visitors; to strengthen the privatization process of hotels; to provide stronger support for private initiatives; to establish centers for summer and winter tourism; to reform education and training in tourism; and to support tourism at the central level.

### **3. GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KAMENICA**

The geographical position of the Municipality of Kamenica is peripheral and located at the easternmost edge of Kosovo, but it serves as a connecting bridge between Kosovo and the municipalities of southern Serbia, mainly inhabited by Albanians. Through the Gjilan–Bujanoc main road, it is connected with other centers of Kosovo. Gjilan is 30 km away, while Pristina is 75 km from Kamenica. Pristina can also be reached by shorter routes through Novobërda and Llabjan. Thus, in both directions the distance is shortened by 50–55 km. The nearest railway stations are in Ferizaj and Bujanoc. The nearest airport is Pristina Airport, 90 km away, and Skopje Airport, 130 km away.

In 1959, Kamenica obtained municipal status.

The terrain of the Municipality of Kamenica is hilly and mountainous, with several valleys around rivers and alluvial soil highly suitable for vegetable growing and other agricultural crops.

These areas extend through the basins of the Krivareka, Desivojca, and Hogosht rivers in the north, while the southern part extends around the Anamorava River. In percentage terms, the territory of the Municipality of Kamenica is 60% hilly-mountainous and 40% flat. The Municipality of Kamenica has a moderate continental climate, with hot summers and cold winters. The absolute maximum temperature is 37°C in August, while the absolute minimum is –32°C in January. The average annual precipitation in the Municipality of Kamenica reaches 596 l/m<sup>2</sup>, while in the mountainous area it increases to 800 l/m<sup>2</sup>. There is a dense hydrographic network, but the most important rivers are the Krivareka, Hogosht, and Desivojca rivers. All these rivers flow into the Morava River. There is also a water reservoir, the lake in the village of Ruboc. The Morava region is a subsiding tectonic region filled with horizontal and transgressive Miocene sediments and lacustrine Pliocene coal-bearing sediments. Geographically and morphologically, the following can be distinguished: the undulating coastal zone with river valleys, which through the action of rivers and streams has been divided into several small or large plateaus, and the hilly-mountainous regional zone, which differs in geomorphological, genetic, and climatic aspects. In terms of composition and value for agricultural production, the soils differ throughout the area. Thus, the Anamorava region is distinguished from other municipalities by more homogeneous pedology.

There is a very rich flora and fauna. It is characterized by a large number of plants, including deciduous woody species such as beech, oak, sessile oak, linden, acacia, hornbeam, ash, etc. Almost all fruit trees of the pome, stone-fruit, nut, and berry groups are also present, including strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, etc.

It is also quite rich in various herbaceous plants and all types of cereals (wheat, oats, barley, corn, etc.). Wild animals include wild boar, fox, wolf, rabbit, etc. Wild birds include wild chicken, partridge, falcon, owl, etc.

As for aquatic fauna, the rivers are rich in fish such as trout and eel. There are also reptiles such as snakes and grass snakes. The fauna is also rich in wild animals and other species, which represents good potential for hunting. The area of the Municipality of Kamenica is 417 km<sup>2</sup>. The number of residents is 36,204, with 4,020 non-residents; the total population of the Municipality of Kamenica is 40,224. Its favorable geographical position may be considered an opportunity for good regional and interstate connections.

### **4. CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Cultural heritage is a sensitive resource whose consumption is increasing faster than the creation and implementation of tourism conservation and protection plans. Cultural heritage becomes a cultural resource in tourism when it is created and activated through preservation and special design. Many settlements throughout history have been destroyed by wars in different periods, resulting in the destruction of housing as well as other associated structures such as castles, churches, mosques, and türbes, which constitute the past or cultural heritage of an area. Settlements in the Municipality of Kamenica date back to ancient times, owing to rich natural conditions (forested mountains, pastures and fertile fields, rich flora and fauna, as well as significant deposits of gold, silver, lead, iron, etc.).

### **5. TOURISM CAPACITY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KAMENICA**

According to this research, in 2016 a total of 495 accommodation units were identified in Kosovo, of which 464 were active and 31 inactive. The capacity of active units was 6,936 rooms and 10,985 beds. The largest number of accommodation units was found in the Municipality of Pristina, followed by Peja, Prizren, Ferizaj, etc.

The number of employees in hotel activities in 2016 was 2,791 workers, of whom 851 were women. Regarding the legal form of enterprises, 87% were individual businesses under private ownership, while the remainder belonged to other legal forms.

**Table 4. Structure of Tourist accommodation capacity in the Municipality of Kamenica**

| No .         | Municipality    | Hotels     | Motels     | Guesthouses | Hostels  | Visitor Apartments | Bungalows | Camping Space | Total      |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|
| 1            | Deçan           | 3          | 0          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 3          |
| 2            | Dragash         | 2          | 0          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 2          |
| 3            | Drenas          | 1          | 5          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 6          |
| 4            | Ferizaj         | 4          | 33         | 4           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 41         |
| 5            | Fushë Kosovë    | 13         | 9          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 22         |
| 6            | Gjakovë         | 12         | 2          | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 15         |
| 7            | Gjilan          | 11         | 10         | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 22         |
| 8            | Graçanicë       | 4          | 8          | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 13         |
| 9            | Hani i Elezit   | 0          | 1          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 1          |
| 10           | Istog           | 7          | 6          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 13         |
| 11           | Junik           | 1          | 1          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 2          |
| 12           | Kaçanik         | 1          | 3          | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 5          |
| 13           | <b>Kamenica</b> | <b>1</b>   | <b>1</b>   | <b>0</b>    | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>           | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>      | <b>2</b>   |
| 14           | Klinë           | 4          | 8          | 6           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 18         |
| 15           | Lipjan          | 2          | 10         | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 13         |
| 16           | Malishevë       | 1          | 3          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 4          |
| 17           | Mitrovicë       | 6          | 7          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 13         |
| 18           | Artanë          | 0          | 2          | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 3          |
| 19           | Obiliq          | 4          | 3          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 7          |
| 20           | Pejë            | 20         | 9          | 29          | 0        | 0                  | 11        | 0             | 69         |
| 21           | Podujevë        | 3          | 1          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 4          |
| 22           | Prishtinë       | 42         | 14         | 2           | 6        | 15                 | 0         | 0             | 79         |
| 23           | Prizren         | 34         | 12         | 1           | 3        | 1                  | 3         | 0             | 54         |
| 24           | Rahovecë        | 3          | 6          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 9          |
| 25           | Ranillug        | 0          | 1          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 1          |
| 26           | Shtërpçë        | 2          | 7          | 1           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 10         |
| 27           | Shtime          | 0          | 5          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 5          |
| 28           | Skenderaj       | 1          | 2          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 3          |
| 29           | Suharekë        | 6          | 4          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 10         |
| 30           | Viti            | 2          | 4          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 6          |
| 31           | Vushtrri        | 2          | 2          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 4          |
| 32           | Zubin Potok     | 1          | 1          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 2          |
| 33           | Zveçan          | 1          | 2          | 0           | 0        | 0                  | 0         | 0             | 3          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                 | <b>194</b> | <b>182</b> | <b>8</b>    | <b>9</b> | <b>16</b>          | <b>38</b> | <b>17</b>     | <b>464</b> |

**Source:** Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ASK), Tourism Capacities – Accommodation Units in Kosovo, 2016.

The main categories of accommodation units in Kosovo are hotels and motels. Hotels account for 42% of the total accommodation units, while motels account for 39%. From the tables and graphs, it can be seen that the Municipality of Kamenica ranks almost last in terms of the number of hotel facilities, number of

accommodation rooms, employment capacity, and tourism revenues, compared with the other municipalities in Kosovo.

#### **6. SWOT ANALYSIS – TOURISM STRUCTURE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KAMENICA**

Through the **SWOT** analysis, we have attempted to present the general details of the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism sector in the Municipality of Kamenica and, on the other hand, highlight the main opportunities and threats.

The strengths of this municipality include its geographical position, friendly and hospitable culture, a peaceful and stable region for foreign investment, nightlife especially during the summer and winter seasons, beautiful mountain landscapes, rivers, parks, waterfalls, mountains, unexplored tourist sites, etc. Weaknesses and threats include the lack of a proper tourism development strategy and coordination at national and local level, lack of prospects and training and education dedicated to the tourism and hospitality industry, underdeveloped infrastructure, lack of initiatives for developing tourism products, lack of adequate representation by an association dedicated solely to tourism, limited interest from the local community, political instability and security concerns at national level, negative information in the international arena, and a fragile political situation.

Considering that the Municipality of Kamenica is among the municipalities rich in mineral ores, it can reasonably be stated that its geographical position is a major factor in the development of this area.

The most important mineral ores of metals and non-metals are: magnesite, kaolinized granite (kaolin), bentonite, quartzite, tuff, clay, limestone, marble, andesite, feldspar, granite, sand and gravel, garnet, and antimonite.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- Very favorable geographical position and easy, close connections between cities and tourist destinations;
- Very favorable geographical position, serving as a connecting bridge between Kosovo and the municipalities of southern Serbia, mainly inhabited by Albanians, with easy access to Corridor X connecting to Europe and international trade;
- Known for its friendly culture and hospitality;
- Peaceful and stable region for foreign investment;
- Although the number of hotels and accommodation facilities is insufficient, there is good potential for increasing them;
- Good HoReCA (gastronomy) culture;
- Readiness of local institutions to support tourism and foreign investment;
- Nightlife, especially during the summer and winter seasons, during the diaspora holiday period;
- Rich landscapes, rivers, parks, waterfalls, mountains;
- Unexplored tourist sites;
- Hospitality, friendly culture, a more religiously tolerant city, and multilingualism.
- Reasonable prices;
- Construction works on the highway (Dheu i Bardhë);

#### **WEAKNESSES**

- Unfavorable business climate and negative information in the international arena;
- Political instability and security issues at national level.
- Negative information in the international arena.
- Fragile political situation.
- Unsatisfactory infrastructure / weak to average infrastructure (electricity, roads, water supply, sewage, posters, catalogs, billboards, tourist destination signage, fairs, websites, etc.).
- Lack of tourism promotional materials and tourist destination signage.
- Negative perception among international audiences, foreign tourists, visitors, and foreign investors.
- Lack of mechanisms and government advertising/support for the tourism sector at national and local level; lack of tourism activities; lack of a tourism development strategy; lack of a website for tourism promotion; inadequate management of visitor centers in different municipalities; insufficient promotion of cultural-historical heritage; continued absence of international hotel chains; lack of statistics; unsatisfactory environmental conditions concerning rivers, forests, and waste.
- Active VAT for foreign tourists.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- Information through information centers, leaflets, posters, signage, catalogs, billboards, and the possibility of developing a tourism website for Kamenica.
- Preparation of a tourism strategy.
- Possibility of promoting Kamenica through recent investments by the Turkish company “GURIS Holding,” which could serve as a model of stability, security, and strong support.

- Potential and capacity for investment, especially in mountainous areas (ski centers, hospitals and rehabilitation centers, expansion of investment in wind-power plants, water factories, investment in guesthouses in rural areas and their promotion to stimulate rural tourism and create employment through rural tourism).
- Access to EU funds and various organizations for the development of cross-border tourism and attraction of foreign investment related to tourism, made attractive by the post-war period and a peaceful, cooperative environment among all communities.
- Expansion, exploration, protection, and promotion of cultural-historical heritage through UNESCO, promotion of the Municipality as a largely unexplored destination, and setting investment priorities in the municipality.

#### **THREATS**

- Lack of cooperation regarding tourism development between central and local government.
- Unfavorable business climate, ranking almost last due to the political climate and negative information in the international arena; political instability at national level and a fragile political situation affecting Kosovo's negative image.
- So far, there has been no proper strategy and coordination for tourism development at national and local level.
- Very small budget for the tourism sector at national and local level.
- Lack of prospects and training and education dedicated to the tourism and hospitality industry.
- Insufficient focus on municipal projects and inadequate staff training in the tourism department.
- Lack of initiatives for developing tourism products, lack of adequate representation by an association dedicated solely to tourism, and limited interest from the local community.
- Underdeveloped infrastructure.
- Very low attention, interest, and flexibility in using funds allocated by international organizations for tourism projects.

#### **7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the above, it can be freely concluded that this Municipality is facing major problems related to the preservation of cultural-historical and natural heritage, failure to identify appropriate strategies, failure to establish priorities in the field of tourism, unclear policies related to tourism development, inclusion of unqualified personnel in the development of tourism products, inadequate tourism management, insufficient technical infrastructure, capital investment needs, and the lack of an appropriate concept and approach to sustainable tourism development in the absence of adequate marketing strategies.

The conditions, geographical position, potentials, climate, and even modest investment in infrastructure could, in my opinion, provide a basic starting point for making this Municipality a highly attractive tourism and recreation destination by stimulating mountain, transit, and archaeological tourism, increasing revenues, employment, and social welfare, and improving the Municipality's prospects. Based on the limited data available on the tourism potential and capacities of this municipality, it can be concluded that tourism in this area could be highly attractive, generating significant revenues and contributing to reducing unemployment not only in the Municipality of Kamenica but throughout Kosovo.

Tourism today is an essential factor with a major impact on the development of a country, a key and highly profitable sector of the economy compared with other industries, and a sector with a strong growth trend in the coming decades, creating new jobs and generating financial revenues. Given this trend, our primary focus should be on this sector not only at the local level but also at the central level. Since Kosovo has no direct access to the sea, it can be concluded that the focus should be directed toward other tourism resources, especially mountain tourism, which has very good potential in this segment, as well as historical, cultural, and natural heritage, thereby creating a highly attractive environment for investment and the development of tourism products for tourists.

The tourism industry has existed since ancient times and today occupies a key position not only in our economy but throughout the world. Considering the numerous natural potentials and favorable climatic conditions, air quality, and rare natural beauty, the intensity of hospitality enterprises in the Municipality can currently be said to be increasing year by year, but it is still far from meeting market requirements and stimulating the attraction of foreign tourists. Tourism is increasingly becoming a key economic sector generating financial revenues and creating new employment opportunities. Taking into account the areas with tourism potential in our Municipality, this paper analyzes the Municipality of Kamenica, especially the mountain villages, as a tourism area with opportunities for investment in many segments, including wind-energy investments, excellent conditions and location for rehabilitation centers and hospitals, various factories, a ski center with all the characteristics of a modern center (modern cable car, optimal capacity and space), various farms with extensive pasture areas, and sites for hospitals and rehabilitation centers, for which these natural conditions are not

available in other municipalities. In addition to addressing the issues mentioned above, it is very important that efforts for tourism development now be directed toward concrete circumstances and sound strategies. In this way, this area can have hope and optimism for increasing the competitiveness of the hospitality industry, which will not only increase the number of tourists but also contribute to the overall development of the Kosovo economy.

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