

Touristic Zone in the Region of Peja

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Abstract

Taking into account the areas with tourist potential that exist in our country, this paper analyzes the city of PEJA, as a transit tourist area, whose diverse resources can offer countless opportunities for development in this area. Over the last few decades, rapid technological, architectural, and cultural changes have taken place, bringing about a complete transformation of the spirit and tourist structure of our cities, especially PEJA. It is generally accepted that the Rugova region has enormous natural values and very rich biodiversity. The consensus applies not only nationally but also internationally. It is also well known that the Rugova region is under strong anthropogenic pressure resulting in gradual degradation of biodiversity and other natural values. However, very little has been done in Kosovo to preserve these values, ie to protect the region. Moreover, even the few attempts to establish some sort of protection regime made so far have failed. Why is that? One of the main reasons is probably the ignorance of the natural values of Kosovo or the lack of hearing about the immeasurable values of nature and biodiversity. Therefore, this study is dedicated to this issue.

Keywords: National Park Rugova, Landscapes, Development, Planning, Sustainable Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Countries in the early stages of tourism development, such as Kosovo, have the opportunity to reap many benefits from tourism, such as reducing poverty and increasing economic development. Kosovo's tourism industry is new compared to other Southeast European countries. This is mainly due to the lack of investment for many decades, inadequate tourism programs and offers from the private sector, lack of educated tourism staff, inadequate investment policies and lack of coordination between private stakeholders and government agencies. Although the number of tourists and the length of their stay in Kosovo have increased significantly in the last ten years, the number of international visits per year is far below the regional average. Taking into account the areas with tourist potential that exist in our country, this paper analyzes the city of PEJA, as a transit tourist area, whose diverse resources can offer countless opportunities for development in this area.

Over the last few decades, rapid technological, architectural, and cultural changes have taken place, bringing about a complete transformation of the spirit and tourist structure of our cities, especially PEJA. Kosovo does not have enough data on many species in many areas. It is generally accepted that the Rugova region has enormous natural values and very rich biodiversity. The consensus applies not only nationally but also internationally. It is also well known that the Rugova region is under strong anthropogenic pressure resulting in gradual degradation of biodiversity and other natural values. However, very little has been done in Kosovo to preserve these values, ie to protect the region. Moreover, even the few attempts to establish some sort of protection regime made so far have failed. One of the main reasons is probably the ignorance of the natural values of Kosovo or the lack of hearing about the immeasurable values of nature and biodiversity.

As we know Kosovo (alongside with Moldova) is probably the least known and visited country in western Balkan. While the Balkans is blooming with popularity, getting thousands of visitors each month, Kosovo tourism is just starting to take off, also is the youngest country in Europe (Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008) is still unknown to many people.

KOSOVO AS A TOURISTIC DESTINATION

Kosovo's territory, despite its many advantages, is still unrecognizable as a major tourist destination, and political events that are still under way have been significantly hampered. Kosovo is still recognized as a black spot and the focus of new conflicts in the Balkans and the region of Southeast Europe, which is why much more needs to be done to strengthen recognition of the territory as an important tourist destination. Natural attractions include the geographical location of the destination, the climate, the flora and fauna, and other natural resources. Cultural attractions include various cultural and historical monuments, folklore and more. In Kosovo, all these attractions are presented in significant numbers. Kosovo's natural resources are diverse and, among other things, stand out for their beauty and the content of Sharr Mountain National Park, Rugova Park, etc. The specific values of Kosovo's attractiveness can be the basis for the development of cultural, transit, winter, sports, hunting, spa and other types of tourism. The international community, which still controls Kosovo's institutions, is trying to diversify its activities to recognize the territory as a new tourist destination in Europe.

Kosovo as a whole is divided into 5 tourist regions: Prishtina Tourist Region, Sharr Mountain tourist region, Anamorava Tourist Region, The Tourist Region of the Albanian Alps and the Central Tourist Region of Kosovo, where they also entered the tourist region of Prishtina. The European Union and the Council of Europe have launched an initiative to create a cultural road to Western Kosovo, which supports the promotion of cultural diversity in Kosovo. The cultural route of western Kosovo refers to the cities: Junik, Gjakova, Peja, Klina, Deçan and Istog. Each of these municipalities has the task of defining its potentials that are part of the common heritage. Given the richness reflected in the cultural and historical monuments on the territory of Kosovo, there are basic assumptions for the development of cultural tourism. Kosovo's cultural heritage is a sensitive resource whose consumption is growing faster than the creation and implementation of tourism plans and protection. Cultural heritage becomes a cultural resource in tourism when it is created and activated by the conservation process and special design. As we know, today the Tourism sector plays a significant role in economic development, especially affecting job creation and increasing exports of services. In

2016, this sector (including its broad impact) contributed \$ 7.6 billion to the global economy, creating about 292 million jobs. To put things in perspective, tourism alone accounts for about 10% of the world economy and jobs, as well as 30% of services exports.

GENERAL APPROACH IN THE TOURIST OFFER IN THE REGION OF PEJA

Tourism in Kosovo is a growing sector with many tourists visiting the country every year. By tourism we mean the movement of people for the purpose of recreation, entertainment, healing and the expansion of cultural knowledge. Although Kosovo is a small geographical area, with its natural and human motives, it offers good opportunities for the development of some types of domestic, regional, international, stationary and transit tourism. Kosovo has tourist places that can be used by its population for excursions, sports, recreation, leisure, culture, education.

Population and history of the city

The entire municipality of Peja is inhabited by 100.000 citizens; 60.000 are concentrated in the city of Peja. In the last decade there has been a large migration of the population into the city from rural areas because of better living conditions and employment opportunities. The city itself is very attractive where several cultures can be encountered. The population is a mixture of 90% Albanians and the other 10% is composed of Serbs, Bosniacks, Roma, Egyptian, Ashkali, Goran and others. Peja is one of the oldest inhabited places in Kosovo. It was inhabited by the Illyrians and was an important city of ancient Dardania. Here a number of archaeological objects have been discovered convincing us that this has been an administrative center for the whole region of Dukagjini. Peja, in the ancient and middle ages, and up until the Fifteenth Century, laid in a valley starting from the arable lands called Gradinë. There you can see the ruins of ancient Peja and the tomb "Sari i Salltëkut." Today the same area begins at the battery factory in the east and runs to the railway station in the west. Peja, through history, had many different names: in the Illyro-Roman ancient ages it was called Siparantum and during the middle Ages it was called Pech, Peka, Pentza and Forno. The oldest document where Peja is first mentioned with its Latin name Pech, is from 1202. Today

it is called Peja in Albanian and Pec in Serbian. In that period trade was well developed in Peja. Then it was concentrated in the Colony of the Dubrovians. Peja, then known as Dardan Spirant, is mentioned in an ancient map "Geography of Ptolomey" in the Third and Fourth Centuries (under Roman rule) when it had the status of Municipium. Peja was one of the most important cities of Dardania right after Ulpiana (today's Prishtina). Peja, after the battle of Kosovo (1389), and until the year 1462, was administrated by the Balshaj family (1378) and later by the Dukagjini family. The history of Peja is closely linked with the Dukagjini family. From the battle of Gjergj Kastriot Scanderbeg in 1462 this city was governed by Lekë Dukagjini the Third. After that Peja was part of the Sanjak of Shkodra (Albania) for several centuries until the mid-Fifteenth Century. It is interesting to follow the changes of the different ethnic and cultural influences in the city of Peja starting with the Dardanian, to the Roman, Byzantine, and Slavic and into the Ottoman (Turkish) period.

Language and religion - The dominant language is Albanian. One can also find Serbian being spoken in Serbian communities. In Peja, like in most of Kosovo, you can find different religions. The dominant religion is Islam but the Catholic and Orthodox religions are present as well. The co-existence of the different religions in Peja is evident as you will see mosques, churches, tekas, etc.

Economic and natural potentials - At present the main economic drivers of Peja are: tourism, trade, transportation, agriculture, the food and beverage industry and construction materials. In the city of Peja and Rugova tourism has taken on a special emphasis since 2000. New infrastructure has been completely dedicated to the development of tourism. New buildings, especially hotels and restaurants have been constructed, especially along the roads connecting Peja to Rugova and Peja to Radac. Today Peja is among the most important trade and tourist centers of Kosovo. The city of Peja and its surroundings continue to play an important role in the economic development of the country. The majority of its surface is composed of agricultural land, favorable for the development of agriculture, animal farming and arboriculture. The region produces excellent fresh fruits and vegetables, milk and milk products, meat and meat products. Currently cattle, sheep and poultry production is sufficient for the local market. Travelers desiring

to experience fresh, locally-produced food will find it here. Craftsmanship in Peja has developed from ancient times and has transformed depending on the level of the economic development of the society. Archeologists have discovered many items in Peja like: bula (a type of broach used by both Illyrian men and women), rings, needles, bracelets, bronze helmets, etc. In 1582 there were more than 56 types of craftsmen registered in the city. Trade was the main income of some 43% of the population. Craftsmanship in Peja reached its pinnacle between the Seventeenth and Nineteenth Centuries. The traditions of craftsmanship and artisans and their trades today remain a symbol of this city.

Natural and touristic resources - The area of Peja is filled with attractive and interesting resources for travelers. Those seeking experiences in the wilds of nature as well as admirers of idyllic villages and those looking for traces of the past will all be satisfied. The admirers of winter sports and summer adventures will be stunned by the beauty of the canyons, waterfalls and high peaks. Peja sits at the base of mountains that are rich with evergreen and deciduous forests, where you will find rare, eatable and healing plants. St. John's Wort *hypericum perforatum*, Wild Thyme *thymus serpyllum*, *digitalis feruginea*; Goat's Beard, *Aruncus silvestris* kost, primrose, chamomile, etc; as well forest fruits like: blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, mushrooms, cornels, hazelnuts, can all be found there. Wild animal are seen in the region around Rusolia: bear, deer, wild pig, fox, wild goat, lynx, marten, rabbit, partridge, pheasant, wild chicken, forest rooster have all been seen there. The city of Peja is dissected by the Lumbardhi River which snakes its way through giving it a special charm. Families with children who are anxious to enjoy nature, can find long walks and idyllic resting spots along the river. During hot summer days, the locals delight in cooling off in the water of Lumbardhi at a place known as Burimi i ujit të zi (Spring of the Black Water) near the cave of Demaj, just 3 km from the city and along the river for the next 9 km.

Two kilometers from the city is an outdoor swimming pool, which hosts visitors of all generations but especially young people. You can enjoy the refreshing water or simply a cold drink in the shade. You can find skiing at the Ski Center in the village of Boge with a 1 km alpine lift. Peja sits at the base of the Rugova Mountains. In the

summer temperatures range from 17-20 °C and occasionally up to 20-25 °C. The air is fresh, perfect for all summer activities. The best reason for visiting here is the Rugova Gorge and the spectacular narrow valley alongside the Lumbardhi River. A 32 km road through the Gorge will take you eventually to Qakor in Montenegro. The Gorge is 1.000m deep among the deepest in Europe. From Peja you only need to travel 6 km before you will see a 25 meter waterfall which springs from the rock on the south and pours into the river. Cultural attractions include a variety of cultural and historical monuments, folklore and more. Kosovo's cultural heritage is a sensitive resource whose consumption is growing faster than the creation and implementation of tourism plans and protection. Cultural heritage becomes a cultural resource in tourism when it is created and activated by the process of conservation and special design.

Cultural resources (capacities) are formulated and presented in tourism in three ways: Bearing in mind the previous research for rural development, the characteristics of present tourism development and the nature and structure of the tourism product of Peja, listed the following key principles that should be based tourism and tourism development vision of the municipality of Peja. Physiognomy of the attractive elements of Peja, clearly points to the mountain region, in the direction of the tourist transit, complex and rich natural and cultural heritage, hunting sites and villages.

Tourism Development Strategy, which the market wants to be oriented to target groups, has to make offers that meet the specific desires of the target groups. In determining the target groups, should take into account the four points: the size, financial power, and demanded a selected group, and about their own potential. Therefore a strategic approach to rural tourism development, we can state the following.

Connections and networks - to companies in rural tourism is difficult to survive in isolation. It is therefore necessary to build links and networks between those who provide the product of rural tourism. For example, by working closely, the owner of a rural household and the owner of the stables can offer attractive packages riding horses in nature.

Present position and quality - Rugova

Rugova has several valleys which connect it with other regions; Valley of Shkodra, that connects Rugova with Tropoja and Shkodra; the Qakorr Valley that will take to Plavë and Guci; the valley on the northern side of Boge takes you to Buxhov and Rozhaje; the Valley of Hajla is a wide one that traverses both sides of the border between Kosova and Montenegro and is one of the main roads that connects Rugova will villages of Dacaj and Husaj and continues on to Rozhaje. In Hajla for several years in a row the traditional Rugova Games take place. The Qafa e Qyqes (Neck of the Cockoo) is an area from where you can observe the whole city of Peja. These valleys are great for hiking and climbing. The average altitude of the Rugova Valley is 650-1000m which is mainly inhabited on its east side but also in the west during the summer months. Five kilometers from Peja is a beautiful arched bridge connecting the walls of the canyon. On a large rock near the bridge there is a drawing that is thought to be from Pelazg times. In the same place on the lower side of the road there is a rock marking an area where the Rugova Folk Group promotes the cultural traditions of the area. Three kilometers from the entrance to the park there is a special stone representing a local folk legend. A young girl jumped from the rock here in order to not fall in the hands of hostile invaders, defending her dignity to the end. Continuing further up the gorge you will see more cliffs posing like statues, waterfalls that spring from these rocks, two short tunnels and a rock shelter above the road as it snakes its way towards the valley. This is not the only wealth of Rugova, there are also several natural caves located in the canyon: the cave of Karamakazit, the small caves of the Princess, the cave of Radaci, the cave along the Gerles Koshutanit, the cave near Gurrës së Rutës and in the hillside opposite of Drelaj. In the 5th kilometer is the cave of Jerinës, and a little bit further the cave of Demajve. Eight kilometers from Peja, on the left side of the canyon, 50-60m above the river is the entrance to a truly spectacular cave, the Gryka e Madhe (The Grand Canyon). The cave, which according to studies has 13 km of channels, is marked by a spring at the entrance and is one of the longest caves in the Balkans. From its entrance the cave climbs with its steepness varying in altitude 310m (+296 m, -14 m). A unique part of the cave is the so called -Toboggan, an inclined natural siphon. The cave is beautiful; there are large pillars up to two meters long, soda sticks, stalactites, long curtains, and grouped stalagmites.

Gastronomy

The gastronomy of Peja is characterized by authentic food made with local milk, cheese, yogurt and cream as well also local fruits, vegetables and meats. Dishes such as FLI (corn pie), kachamak, (boiled cheese), lechenik and tasty bread made from corn and wheat prepared in a traditional way can be enjoyed. You can also find Oriental and European cuisine. Local restaurants and hotels serve the wine of Rahoveci region and of course Peja Beer, the local high quality pilsner.

Traditional Costume

The most decorated pieces of our costumes for women are their blouses, vests, aprons, and socks and on the men's costume their socks and vests. Costumes made from different textiles are very interesting. The uniqueness of the textile it's not only in the weaving but the colors and motifs that can identify the woman from a specific region. Many locals are wonderful weavers and painters and you can see their art reflected in their costumes. In the villages of Rugova traditional costumes are still worn with pride and in the National Museum in various galleries you can see traditional costumes and handcrafts from this region. The uniqueness of the Peja in its clothing tradition and the other objects of its culture can be found by visiting the Ethnographic Museum which is located in the center of Haxhi Zeka in Peja.

CONCLUSION

The quality in tourism can contribute to sustainable development by improving the competitiveness of the business sphere, meeting the needs of society and preserving the environment in which we live and act. From what was said above, we can freely conclude that this Municipality is facing major problems, such as the preservation of cultural, historical and natural heritage, failure to identify proper strategies, failure to set priorities in the field of tourism, politics unclear issues related to tourism development, involvement of non-professional staff in relation to the development of tourism products, inadequate tourism management, insufficient technical infrastructure, capital investments, not giving a proper concept and approach to the sustainable development of tourism in the absence of adequate marketing strategies. Conditions, geographical position, potentials, climate and with a modest investment in infrastructure, I think it will

be a basic starting point of this Municipality with a superior tourist and recreational attractiveness stimulating mountain tourism, transit, archeological, revenue growth, employment, welfare social and increasing the perspective of this Municipality. So, based on the symbolic data we have on the potentials and tourism capacities that the country possesses for this municipality, we can conclude that Tourism in this area can be very attractive, where it will generate large revenues and will reduce of unemployment not only for the Municipality of Peja, but for the whole of Kosovo. The intensity of the structure of hotel enterprises in the Municipality of Peja can currently be said to be increasing from year to year, but still far from the criteria to meet market demands and stimulate the attraction of foreign tourists. So, today more and more, tourism is becoming the main sector of the economy by generating financial income and creating opportunities for new jobs. Considering the areas with tourism potential that exist in this Municipality, this paper analyzes especially the mountain villages as a tourism area in many investment segments, excellent conditions and position for the construction of rehabilitation centers, hospitals, various factories, ski center with all the features of a modern center (modern cable car, optimal capacity and space), various farms with a giant pasture space, space for hospitals and rehabilitation centers which these natural conditions do not provide other municipalities.

In addition to addressing the above issues, it is very important that tourism development efforts are already oriented towards concrete circumstances and sound strategies, and thus, this area can have hope and optimism for increasing the competitiveness of the hotel industry, which not only will it increase the number of tourists, but it will also contribute to the overall development of the Kosovo economy in general.

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