

TOURISM AS AN IMPORTANT SECTOR FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OF GJAKOVA

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Tourism has become the largest industry worldwide in terms of economic and social development. The tourism industry has the potential for creating employment and the income. For many countries tourism is an important source of welfare, and is one of the sectors that affect the opportunities for local development. The ability of local development to get benefit from tourism depends on the availability of attractive factors, and the ability to provide a tourist supply that meets the needs of tourists. Gjakova has a tourist potential for the development of winter - sport tourism, cultural tourism, hunting and fishing, health tourism, weekend tourism, transit tourism, business tourism, gastronomic tourism, etc. The purpose of this paper is to present the tourist resources, and the impact of tourism on local development. Paper treats why Gjakova is an attractive country to visit by tourists and who are the possibilities to invest for tourism development.

Key words: tourism, local development, touristic potential, investments, jobs.

1. Introduction

Tourism is considered to be important for economic and social development. The tourism industry is important to labour force, businesses and a significant source government's income. Tourism serves as a catalyst for economic growth, is a main source of foreign exchange earnings, from tourists' spending increased needed income for local businesses to be financially stable. This results in the creation of new jobs, income generation for the labour force and businesses and in this way tax revenues will be generated within the community. It also strengthens the links between many sectors of national economy and helps poverty alleviation. Kosova, respectively Gjakova is an unknown tourist destination for Europe in which visitors can find the secrets of rare and valuable natural and cultural heritage.

2. Tourism resources of Gjakova

Municipality of Gjakova is situated in western Kosovo and has an area of 586 km². In this town lives over 152,000 inhabitants. The average population density is 293b / km². Dominates the new age under 26 years old and about 52%. Gjakova is a city 365m above sea level. The above sea level reaches up to 2000 m (Pashtrik and Koshare) in Kosovo-Albania border area.¹ Gjakova is situated in the central part of Dukagjini region surrounded by mountains of the Albanian Alps, 365m-2656m above sea level.²

Gjakova tourist offer includes local, regional, national and international demand and based on the attraction elements of the city including beautiful landscapes of mountains, whose peaks reach over 2000 m above sea level, preserve natural resources, especially flora and fauna. A variety of natural attractions with unique beauty, such as Canyon of the White Drin, which has become a daily frequented place by people and often visited by students all over Kosovo organizing daily excursions to know the rare beauty of the Drini canon. Right and left of canyon, are built and being built restaurants, camp lodge for rest and recreation.

Known caves such as the "Kusarëve" cave, snow caves in

Pashtrik, "Qirave" in Greqina, cave of pigeons in Gradish, etc., made attractions where can be developed speleotourism. Complexes and cultural heritage assets which have an extremely large value, hunting localities and villages. Also, with a suitable climatic conditions where dominates middle continental climate, with an impact of the Mediterranean climate which leaks into the valley of the White Drin, geographical position and link with other countries provide opportunities for some types of tourism which are outlined below.

Cultural tourism - Archaeological findings shows that in this town is present urban life process organized, since ancient times. Albanian's cultural and historical values, architecture, sculptures, customs and Dardan's habits inherited from ancient period, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and completion of new construction, retain a significant continuing until the present day.

Municipality of Gjakova has a rich cultural heritage and disposes considerable cultural-historical monuments, such as towers, bridges, bazaars, inns, churches, mosques, mills, tekkes, madrasas, hammams, etc.

Among the several monuments of cultural and religious heritage that is worth mentioning are The Hadum Mosque, which was built from 1594-1595 and presents a cultural, educational, religious center that was found nearby libraries and schools,³ etc. Also, The Kusar Mosque (1770), The Mahmut Mosque (1802), the Big Autocephalous Balkanic Tekke of the XVII ct. which considered the oldest saadi tekke in the Old Balkan which was established from 1573-1652. The Shejh Emin Tekke of the XVIII ct. was built in 1730 but restored by gjakovar renowned architect, Shejh Emini in 1856. This object belongs to the civic popular architecture, the Shejh Danjoll Tekke of XIX ct., the Bektashi Tekke, the Ali Baba Tekke, etc.

The Big Madrasas of the year 1707 which was an important center of religious education.

Gjakova has a Catholic religious tradition, were built the Saint Ndou Church in 1882 and the St. Paul and St. Peter Church in 1703, which was destroyed in the war of 1999 but the new cathedral was rebuilt.

¹ Ministry of Trade and Industry : Projects of Touristic Product in Tourist Region of Albanian Alps, pg.14

² Ministry of Trade and Industry : Projects of Touristic Product in Tourist Region of Albanian Alps, pg.14

³ Tourist Guide "Gjakova city and Valbona Valley", pg.26

Gjakova characterized by houses of high rank families, which are shaped tower with large yards, where one of them is set Ethnographic Museum.

The obelisk, dedicated to the martyrs killed in the war against Maxhar, the Maxhar Pasha grave of the year 1878, then the Clock Tower, Haraqija Inn are attractions for tourists. Special values includes the Terzi Bridge of the XVIII ct. and the Tabak Bridge of the XVIII ct., the "Fshejt" Bridge of the XVIII ct.

The asset of Gjakova is Big Bazaar which was established with the appearance of the first craftsmen with years 1594/1595 where Hadum Mosque was built, a "mejtep" (religious school), library, a "muvakihane" (object for measuring the time and for determining the calendar with the help of astrolabe quadrants), a "hamam" (public bath), an inn and some shops.⁴ This presents an oriental urbanistic plan and rich architectural elements. Even today, after total burning in the war of 1999, the Big Bazaar 's architecture is the same even after the reconstruction. In Gjakova were developed a number of handicrafts aimed at meeting the needs of people and export such as silversmiths, tailors, curriers, woolen white hat, embroidery work, caldron work, saddlers, tobacco pipe craft, bookbinders, metal processing, etc. Gjakova is characterized by rich handicraft tradition, filigree, silver, copper, capsule, clay, wood etc. These souvenirs and craft works can be found in many shops, especially in the Big Bazaar. This unique traditional art is well developed in the production and inscriptions in traditional Albanian musical instruments of wood, as "çiftelia", lute, flute, and the construction of children's beds, known as the "djepi".⁵

Transit Tourism - Connectivity of region presents significant value for developing this kind of tourism. The main reason for the possibility of the transit tourism development based in the geographical position in which Gjakova is toward tourist movements, mainly those which connect with other centers through four roads, including the road to Pec, Prizren, Pristina and the Albanian border, through "Qafa e Prushit" and "Qafa e Morinë".

Transit Tourism in Gjakova will be completed with the total construction of roads with Albania, respectively the construction of Vermica-Merdare highway, also the construction of the road Gjakova-Shkodra. Neighbourship to Albania as well as direct lines to the port of Shengjin are good preconditions for the prospering trade. Links border with Albania make the city of Gjakova link-up with other countries and contribute to economic development for this area, and also serves as corridor which links Kosova with the coast of Albania. This advantages can results in the development of cross-border and transit tourism.

Weekend Tourism - Gjakova has numerous potential for development of the weekend tourism, including Radoniqi lake, Erenik river, Shkugëza, Çabрати Hill, White Drin canon, etc. At the "Fshejt" Bridge where which is 37 m long, 7 m wide and 18.50 m high every year is held jumping from the bridge competition.⁶

All the above represent potential opportunities for developing this kind of tourism cause people are increasingly feeling the need for rest and recreation and so by leaving routines, stress caused by work.

Hunting and fishing tourism -

The hunting reserves mainly found in the Koshare and Pashtrik areas in which live different kinds of wild animals and wildfowl such as bears, roes, wild goats, pigs, wolves, rabbits, etc. Types of birds in these mountainous areas are: eagles, pheasant, wild geese, migrant wader, etc. Effects of hunting tourism are important for benefits, where the price for hunting wild animals is quite profitable.

Rivers of Gjakova such as "Ereniku", "White Drin" and "Radoniqi" lake are having various species of fish, such as "Mlysh", "Sharan", "Dylber", etc., which create good conditions for developing this type of tourism.

Hunting and fishing provide important motives for tourist flows, and are also important for attracting a larger number of foreign and domestic tourists, who are interested in developing this type of tourism during the seasons or holidays. Economic benefits in the short and medium term promising enough.

Health Tourism - is in relation to climate places such as "Shkukëza forest which is rich in high trees where most distinguished pines have height to 25 m, also, this place is rich in a significant bioversitet and diversified vegetation.

In the high mountains of the Albanian Alps 2650 m above the sea level, exist ideal medicinal conditions of height where the fresh air considered the best medicine must be given against lung disease, affects the growth of red blood cells, increases the frequency breathing, blood circulation speeds, etc. Construction of tourist facilities, considered necessary for stationary tourism development. Construction of these facilities will affect the length of tourist season in these areas. Today more and more people are leaving urban centers, noise, pollution, because they feel the need to rest. In other words rest, recreation and stay in fresh air have become indispensable. So this kind of tourism by the day is taking the appropriate size of development.

Winter - sport tourism - has great potential and opportunities for development in the mountains of the Albanian Alps. These mountains have great opportunities to ski- runs. In the tourist area of Koshare and Pashtrik exists ideal conditions for the development of climbing and speleotourism. The mountains are covered with high quality wood and scrub. International studies conducted in 70-years show that, at this tourist region, you can build 10 centers for the winter and sports tourism development in the Albanian Alps. The following table are presented the countries with the opportunity to build touristic centers.

⁴ Tourist Guide" Gjakova city and Valbona Valley", pg.48

⁶ Tourist Guide" Gjakova city and Valbona Valley", fq.21

| Paths average level | Main mountains centres | Number of skier | The total capacity of centers |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 880 | Rusolija peak | 19.250 | 40.000 |
| | Kurvala peak | 11.250 | 22.000 |
| | Mountain Belegu | 7.550 | 15.000 |
| | Koprivnik | 6.620 | 11.000 |
| | Rasa e Zogut | 5.150 | 10.000 |
| | Starac | 4.150 | 8.000 |
| | Strelac peak | 3.855 | 7.000 |
| | Hala | 3.780 | 7.000 |
| | Leqinat peak | 2.760 | 5.000 |
| | Mokna peak | 2.030 | 4.000 |
| | Total: | 65.393 | 129.000 |

Fig.1. The possibility of places to build touristic centers.

"Rasa e Zogut" is part of the Municipality of Gjakova means that can invested to construction the ski center which may include 5150 skiers and constitutes a great potential in developing this kind of tourism.

Gastronomic Tourism - Gastronomy as a high value tourist product, every day is taking a high position in the international touristic market. Products and cuisine of Gjakova claim a significant part in it, due to high quality and their beneficial effects on human health. This represents a mixture of Balkan and Oriental cuisine. Traditional foods mainly made from pasta, among the favorites are: "fli", vegetables pie and roasting the lamb. Gjakova known with a casserole delicious cooking of onions, tomatoes, potatoes, rice, casserole with yogurt and garlic, yogurt with papers and the combination of other seasonal vegetables. Characteristic of this country is also preparing the ajvar and sausage which are delicious. Gjakova is also known for producing grape brandy and wine. This wealthy cuisine had promise for the development of this kind of tourism.

Business Tourism - Tourism of such should be dedicated special attention, because it expresses the values of capacities hotels and restaurants, which by their number are more pronounced. A number of hotels, accommodation facilities and hostess services provided facilities and services where are organized meetings, conferences, etc. Category of hotels going up five stars and possess a relatively high capacity of beds. According to hotel statistics, there are six hotels in Gjakova, with the total number of 151 beds.⁷

| Municipality | Number of Hotels | Number of rooms | | | | | Total |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------|----------|------------|------------|-----------|-------|
| | | One bad | Two bads | Three bads | Apartament | Residency | |
| Gjakova | 6 | 110 | 31 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 151 |

Fig.2. Hotel capacity in Gjakova

Number of nights stay of local and foreign visitors:⁸

| Municipality | 2008 | 2009 | TM1 - 2010 | TM2 - 2010 | TM3 2010 |
|--------------|-------|-------|------------|------------|----------|
| Gjakova | 1,537 | 1,823 | 388 | 480 | 453 |

Fig.3. Number of nights stay of local and foreign visitors

The number of local and international visitors:⁹

| Municipality | 2008 | 2009 | TM1 - 2010 | TM2 - 2010 | TM3 - 2010 |
|--------------|-------|-------|------------|------------|------------|
| Gjakova | 1,333 | 1,387 | 268 | 429 | 393 |

Fig.4. Number of nights stay of local and foreign visitors

Most of them are in the service of tourist offer, who need to improve.

2.1 Gjakova is an attractive town for investors because:

- Gjakova has an ideal geographic position, a favorable climate, a clean industrial environment,
- Attractive mountain landscapes, nature preserve, especially flora and fauna
- Rich cultural heritage
- The cost of labor is relatively low
- Qualification is generally high
- Being identified as a priority sector for economic development, investments in tourism are regulated by a comprehensive framework of law.

2.2. Which are the possibilities for investment?

- Mountain areas of Pashtrik and Koshare
- Locality of Shkukëza and Çabrati,
- Locality of Radoniqi lake
- Locality of the White Drin canyon
- Big Bazaar
- Towers
- Gjakova's Airport

2.3. Where can invest?

- Hotels, resorts, touristic villages and conference auditorium.
- The rural tourism support from special activities which based in existing villages, existing residence, the roof in mountain, camping's in mountains zone and the villages.
- The hunting and the fishing.
- Culture centers.
- Sport centers like, the golf and tennis, etc.

3. Local government as a partner

Local government is making efforts to create favorable climate to attract foreign investment in Gjakova. The municipal and urban development plan of Gjakova 2005-2015, includes the development of tourism. The plan is intended and will play a crucial role in Gjakova municipal development by 2015, attracting visitors and foreign investments. The central part of Spatial Plan is Spatial Development Strategy.

This proposed strategy is based on three main principles:¹⁰

- *Develop strong network of urban economic development.* Most urban areas have improved and the infrastructure network is established between the small and large localities. Healthcare and education were offered citizens, agriculture and light industry is supported in rural areas,

⁷ Statistical Office of Kosova "Hotel Statistics TM3 2010", pg. 6

⁸ Statistical Office of Kosova "Hotel Statistics TM3 2010", pg. 6

⁹ Statistical Office of Kosova "Hotel Statistics TM3 2010", pg. 6

¹⁰ Municipal Assembly of Gjakova: The municipal and urban development plan of Gjakova 2005-2015, pg.29

heavy industry is rehabilitated, trade and tourism are supported.

- *Development and protection of natural resources.*

Protection and rational use of the environment, cultural and natural heritage, quality of agricultural land, mineral resources, and control localities development.

- *Development of strategic linkages.*

Integration into regional and Transport European Network (TEN-T), improvement of transport needs in Kosovo, stable supply of electricity, water supply for households and industry.

In this way development plan:

- Will enhance tourism development and environmental value, social and cultural issues that are important for Gjakova and its visitors;
- Will secure tourism engagement and financing of tourism from local and center government;
- Will facilitate and support the act of operators to do business in this sector;
- Will support the private sector, business, civil society and citizens as partners in meeting the objectives, using natural and human resources and infrastructure capacity by improving the quality of life and economic development through decentralization of local government;
- Will develop social, economic and cultural building on the basis of modernization of the economy with new technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and new knowledge.
- Will use favourable geographical position to obtain benefits and to lead the investment towards tourism, industry and services development.
- Will develop a network coordination of businesses, with dynamic growth of employment, modern education system, meeting the business needs of the municipality.

4. The problematic

Municipality of Gjakova faces with a numerous problems which can inhibit the attraction of visitors and investors. Some of the problematic are described below:

- *Infrastructure:* Gjakova faces with major problems of road infrastructure. The highway does not pass through Gjakova. In addition, the only railway line in the Dukagjin area not going through Gjakova and exists a low standard including road network, then the water tubing, sewerage, telecommunications networks, etc. There are problems with water supply and drainage in some areas, failure of sewage, inadequate roads within the city, insufficiency maintenance of local roads, paths, etc. Lack of roads in some rural areas, traffic jam, some places are not achievable, especially in winter, insufficient parking spaces, lack of signaling and lighting, which are major problems in the development of tourism in Gjakova. Poor infrastructure and weak connection to all main transportation arteries, can prevents investments.
- *Abuse of touristic value:* We consider that made a big disturbance of tourist values, starting from the war of 1999, and continues today.

This happened especially in the area of the city center, the Big Bazaar or Old Town, etc. due to the inefficiency of the administration and inspection.

- *Environmental pollution, noise and esthetics* comes as a result of continued construction taking place in city, construction uncontrolled, inadequate urban planning, inadequate infrastructure, increased number of automobiles, noise pollution created by the entertainment sector. Problems are more prevalent in the sector of environmental protection including cutting trees illegally, impurity of water resources due to lack of sewage treatment, destruction of nature and the environment in some areas. Uncontrolled depositing of waste in public places and badly management of waste create negativ impression to visitors about the cleanness and can adversely affect people's vacations.

- *Inefficient administration:* Functioning of public administration is characterized by a slower tempo, which can cause negative effects for the development of the area. Insufficient plans for tourism development, slow implementation of plans and development programs, information exchange is not of sufficient quality. This is a fact that bureaucracy is the result of inadequate organization and lack of modern administrative methods which act as a key factor for providing high quality services to individuals and enterprises.

- *Safety:* Public safety problems produces serious and complex disadvantage for the sustainable tourism development. Public sensitivity to security issues is extremely high. Gjakova perceived by the public as a place not too sure as a result of crimes that occur, also with a low level of functioning of the judiciary system.

- *Quality of service:* Service quality is not on the desired level. This comes from the fact of nonexperience in terms of tourism and lack of professionalism. There is a relatively high number of unskilled employers in the tourism and investment are not enough in the development of human resources, also there is a lack the training of staff. We need to open more tourism schools, in addition the businesses have to keep in mind that the quality of service is one of the most essential for the benefit of customers.

- *Lack of information:* Gjakova does not have an information center where tourists can be informed for visiting attractive places or other information that was needed to hotels, restaurants, etc. We must have reform in the creation of a promotion by electronic data enriched with websites related to tourism and to apply online. Also, efforts to promote the touristic product of Gjakova judged to be insufficient and not effective. This is mainly due to the lack of a comprehensive and long-term marketing plan to be implemented effectively. This results in the fact that there isn't great cooperation and agreement between local government and businesses regarding the priorities and objectives in order to achieve them.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Touristic potentials of Gjakova Municipality comprises major advantages for tourism development and its various types like, winter-sports, cultural, hunting and fishing, health tourism, weekend tourism, transit, business, gastronomic, etc. Gjakova has different properties to become an important tourist destination. If Gjakova tries to attain a sustainable development is important for local

government to consider three aspects: economic, social, environmental and try to develop and implement strategies that balance these three areas.

Based on the findings, we have come to different recommendations that may be useful for achieving the sustainable local development and attract investors:

- To do efforts for creating favorable business environment to investments based in incoming secured from tourism and in growth of employment in this sector.
- Strategy for sustainable tourism development is necessary.
- Improving infrastructure and regulation of signaling and lighting.
- Increased accommodation facilities: more high-class hotels, especially with 5 stars.
- Reduce the level of pollution, degradation and become effective management of remaining.
- Protection of natural resources and create no noise and ecological environment.
- Preservation and restoration of cultural heritage.
- Advertising of tourism product more in the media, magazines, etc., but also new sources of communication such as internet.

- Opening tourist information center, also, information should be available to tourists in all part of country.
- Local culture and crafts should be encouraged.
- Increased security and functioning of the judiciary system.
- Participation of the private sector and citizens in the development of tourism should be given an impulsion.
- Support for modern education, to develop a coordinating network of business with dynamic growth of employment where the contemporary educational system meets the business needs of the municipality.
- Increasing the efficiency of local management.
- Development of cross-border trade and services coordination with Albania, and further Shengjin seaport through the Morina border crossing point.
- To develop a road, rail, air infrastructure for increased trade and services with quick links to other cities within Kosovo and abroad.
- Development of Gjakova's Airport for economic, civil and services use.
- Sustainable development of agriculture and industry.

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