

REGIONAL TOURISM, INCREASING DEVELOPER OF THE GEO-AREA OF VLORA DISTRICT

FATLINDA SHKURTI & ILIRA LLUPA

Lecturer, Department of Education, Faculty of Human Science, University "Ismail Qemali" Vloora, Albania

ABSTRACT

Albania has been going through a long transitional period, economic priority has changed deeply recently making its fast rise in the tourism area. The trendy tourism is characterized by the rise in the tourist number and the exploitation of the space, creating conditions for a longer stay of the tourists in one place. The population increase and the building of many unplanned tourism capacities are dangerous to the natural areas. The tourism is a consumer of the natural area but it has to preserve some primary qualities of the nature.

In this article we are going to talk and analyze the resources, the development and the features of the tourism in the district of Vlora. We have analyzed the role of natural and human factors in the tourism sector, the rational exploitation of the resources and the creation of stable development. We treat the importance of the tourism in the region economy, the decrease of the unemployment, the rise of the social life, the society emancipation, the improvement of the way and level of the living of the population.

Analyzing the indicators of the actual condition, the realization of a modern tourism requires a great and complex infrastructure, from the experience and leading point of view, the financial needs, investments, the personnel training etc. From these aspects it is obvious that the development of the tourism should be based in modern concepts, with double goals of entwining the natural potential and the human potential toward the international market and its parameters. The article aims to show the implementation in the strategy of tourism development in the geo area of Vlora district.

KEYWORDS: Geo-Area, Tourism Capacities, Space Consummator, Regional Cooperation and the Tourism, Development Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Methodology

The treatment of the stated problem will be realized by evaluation of the natural and human resources offered by the district of Vlore with its features and characteristic by explaining their role and importance in the tourism offer of this area versus other areas of the region and beyond. The area under the study offers natural potential for an overall and diverse tourism. The economic evaluation of the natural potential aims to acknowledge, determine and present the natural resources in function of the economic development (the tourism in this case). The most important priority is the impact of the tourism development on the environment and the consequences that come from its fast development.

BACKGROUND

The exploitation of the natural resources in the geo-area of Vlora district has started after 1990's in the

XX century. The development of the tourism capacities is spread on the costal hills and in the lower areas recently. Initially tourist structures rose slowly and smoothly with the development of tourist areas with the environmental space. Tourism is considered as an activity with intensive developments and high income potential, because there is a regional and international market with growing levels. Emphasis will be placed on maintaining these assets and good management in the period of democratic transition, as these are the potential economic value for a quick development throughout the region.

The Impact of the Geographic Position and the Natural Resources in the Tourism Development

The Role of Geographic Position

The geographical area of the Vlore district lies southwest of Albania, south of the downstream flow Vjosë river and is part of two major physico-geographical units: Western Region (Granary of Vlora, Topalltia and hills of Selenicë) and all Southern Region covering the southwestern part up to the border.

In terms of administrative-territorial organization the District of Vlora consists of three districts: Vlora (with area 1609 km²), Saranda (758 km²) and Delvin (351 km²), of 7 municipalities, from 19 municipalities and 198 villages. According to the districts, respectively: 98 villages organized in 9 municipalities in Vlora district, 62 villages in seven municipalities in Saranda district and 38 villages in three municipalities in the District of Delvinë.¹

Centre of the County is the city of Vlora, an industrial, commercial and educational center of multiple connections. It is an ancient city and main port of the country and holds the "keys" of the gate (channel) of Otranto.² Vlora District as a center and important port city of the country is only 72 km away from Italy (Otranto Channel) and 77 miles to Greece (Corfu island).

The wide exit to the sea and the area that connects the Strait of Otranto with two peninsulas: the Apennine and Balkan, made it an important marine and terrestrial joint.³ The value of this position is more than understandable and justifiable. With the construction of 10th Corridor these values will multiply in all aspects of life of the study area, as this area links the country with other countries in the region (Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, Turkey, etc.). Developing transport and trade infrastructure will further advance the development of tourism and other services in the territory that are encouraged from its growth.

The Geological Potential and Landscape Features in the Function of the Tourism

The Geological Potential in Tourism Function

The study area belongs to the petrologic and paleogeographic evolution of the ionian area, Sazani area and a small area in the north (Sinclinal of Myzeqe) of the study area belong to another tectonic unit of a lower rank than areas which is the Premountaneous Wetland or Panadriatic⁴ which belong to the outer zones of Southern Albanids.

Vlora Bay Region is evaluated in lithological terms as limestone, starting from limestone of the Jurassic to the Neogene limestone. Limestone appear in the form of massive tiles and partially compact marble. In these rocks are developed groundwater and surface karst formations as wells, gaps and plenty of interesting forms for tourism.

¹ *Profili i Qarkut Vlorë*, Tiranë 2003, faqe 31

² Vlora, Guidë, 2006, faqe 49

³ Krutaj, F., Gaçe, B., Abazi, H: *Vlora porti jugor i Adriatikut*, Tiranë, 2001, faqe 3

⁴ Qiriazi, Perikli, "Gjeografia Fizike e Shqipërisë", Tiranë, 2001, faqe 11

From the construction point of view it should be noted that the formation of this specific area is related to "serious" tourist building structures.⁵ It is recommended the construction of residential, and small tourism villages, but is not reasonable to build large hotels, massive cementation etc.

Relief in Function of the Tourism

The Relief of Vlorë district in general is exposed toward the west southwest direction. This stretch is a feature of the coastal mountains that rise from bay of Vlorë and Drashovica entrance to the mountain of Cika (2045m). From this mountain they lower again to hills in the west of the Delvina field.⁶ Karaburun, Chanal Base and the Mila Mountain do not have this form. The most considerable part of the Vlorë district is hilly and mountains with a considerable steepness right to the sea. In the zones near the Narta lagoon, in the city of Vlorë, in the Dukati lagoon, Borshi, and Butrint the steepness goes up to one degree.

The hilly and mountainous relief from the north to the south decreases gradually down to 8-10 degrees to achieve a maximum of 45 degrees in the chain of Lungara, Çika, Karaburun, Lukove, Ksamil, Shendelli. This relief feature is an important indicator that should be well evaluated for the construction of tourism structures. It is obvious that the constructions should be evenly distributed. On the other side the steepness is a phenomenon that allows the development inside a small zone of different types of tourism (balnear, marine, hydro, mountainous, cultural, speleological, underwater etc.)⁷

Climacteric Richness

Climatic characteristics of the study area are a result of the cosmic, planetary collaboration factors that have an impact on creating climatic anomalies and local factors: the contour features (configuration and orientation of general NW-SE mountain ranges and river valleys), the presence of gorges and valleys that connect the inner parts (softens the mountain side effect) but a major role plays proximity to the sea which mitigates the extreme climate effects.⁸

Vlorë district is part of the Mediterranean climatic zone with mild winters and relatively wet and dry summers, which as is known, in addition stimulates the activity of human asode the physiological functions.⁹ Here in this area cohabite the maritime climate with mountain one, sea beaches with rivers, flat relief with the Alpine landscape. Climate is the first tourist offer as here are recorded 2700 hours of sun light or about 8 hours of sunshine per day, this figure quite obvious not only for our country but for the entire Balkans¹⁰. With a Mediterranean climate that is expressed in favorable temperatures and access to solar radiation, geographical spaces in the study area present a very favorable view of tourism. According to the months of the year, sunning duration hours range from about 115 (in December) to over 340 hours (in July and August). Sunning is the most positive factor in the use of sunbathing on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, but also to Vjosa river valleys, Shushica, Castle of Pavle.

During the sunbathing season, sunning catches 40% of the potential overall timeframe. This phenomenon is a very positive factor not only for sunbathing, but also for the economic use of solar energy. Temperatures affect directly and

⁵ Masterplan i veprimtarive turistike në Qarkun e Vlorës, SHB Fast Edit di Acquaviva Picena, 2002, faqe 30

⁶ Qiriazi, P. "Gjeografia fizike e Shqipërisë", Tiranë, 2001, faqe 29

⁷ *Profili i Qarkut Vlorë*, Tiranë 2003, faqe 20

⁸ *Profili i Qarkut Vlorë*, Tiranë 2003, faqe 23

⁹ Krutaj, F., Gaçe, B., Abazi, H "Vlorë porti jugor i Adriatikut", Tiranë 2001, faqe 25

¹⁰ Konferenca Shkencore "Mjedisi, turizmi dhe zhvillimi i qëndrueshëm i Rajonit të Vlorës", Vlorë 2004, fq 7

indirectly on the living activity of the population. Average temperatures for many years in the study territory range from 16.1 °C to 17.6 °C in Vlora to Saranda.¹¹

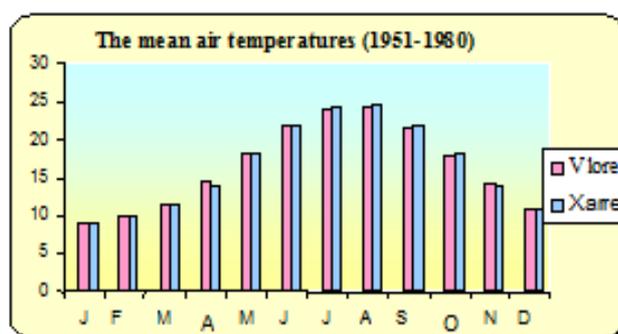


Figure 1: The Mean Multiannual Temperatures of the Air (1951-1980)

According to the seasons, in the winter the mean temperature goes from 9.1°C in Vlora, to 9.2°C in Xarra. In the summer the temperatures fluctuate from 24.2°C in Vlora to 24.6°C in Xarre. The coldest month for all the stations is January with its mean annual temperature of 9-9.1°C. August is the hottest month for all the study area with temperatures fluctuating from 24.2 °C to 24.6 °C. In the heights over 1000 m it decreases to 20°C. The hottest period of the year is the third part of July and the first part of August which is valuable for the balnear tourism on the sea and river coast.

Water Resources

Water resources constitute a very important condition for the development of tourism. According to world standards every tourist needs 300-500 liters of water in 24 hours.

The presence of abundant water, total water reserves, and their annual spatial distribution, the feeds, physico-chemical characteristics, etc., constitute a natural heritage of great importance to human activity as; the source of life, an important factor for the creation and deployment of urban centers; agricultural development, in particular that of energy industry; sunbathing tourism, water sports or recreational values of the spaces around the water surface; treatment of some diseases by using physico-chemical properties of specific water resources etc. In this regard, the study territory is seen and regarded to be very rich in hydropower reserves of physico-chemical and socio-tourist valuable properties.

The hydrographic network of Vjosa watershed consist of: downstream of Vjosa; Shushica, the greatest influence for this area, smaller rivers and streams that flow into the river of Shushica those of Smokthina, Kuci, Vajza, Vllahina, Kauri, Pavla basin, Kalasa and Bistrica. The Vlora region except the rich hydrographic network has also lakes such as Narta lagoon, Butrint, Orikum and the lake of patomogen origin of Bufi or Rreza. The area lagoon ecosystems of the study (71.1km²) are important areas for fishing, salt extraction, tourism, as well as populating the area with numerous water birds. The vast emergence in the two seas enables the development of trade, fishing and and medical tourism which development is given priority for the potential that this space offers.

The Biogeographic Offer

The geo-area fo the district of Vlora is rich in various types of plants and wild animals, that are an important component of the tourism offer of the region.

¹¹ Abazi,H. "Të njohim vendlindjen", SHBLSH, Tiranë 1979, faqe 57

Flora forest is the crown and the most beautiful and most perfect of ornament of terrestrial ecosystem. It has contributed to the protection and preservation of our ecosystem as it retains the soil, improves the microclimate, protects crops, favors tourism, hunting, recreation, and increases the attractiveness of the environment. It represents the greatest potential soil protector of all environmental ecosystems.

Evaluation of this element of the natural environment is a necessity in order to identify stocks and options that it provides for the development of agriculture and animal industry, forestry, rural tourism and other vital activities. Vlova District Vegetation is diverse due to various forms of relief, climate and microclimate. Of 208 species of trees across the country, more than 150 are found in this area.¹² The animal world is another valuable asset to the geographical environment in economic terms. This value is related to the development of hunting, meeting the needs of some food but also represents a real opportunity for the development of tourism, given that the turnover of selected tourist certain types of wild fauna motifs constitute exclusive resort development, for which are paid higher prices. The requirements are very high; this is one of the fewest places left in Europe where some representative species of wild animals still exist. Free hunting in the region is for rabbits, wolves, foxes and 13 bird species. Since hunting tourism is possible in the region, not all animals can be hunted. For this purpose it is recommended the classification of fauna in three categories:

- Rare animals considered “nature jewels” of the region as gazelles; its hunting is not allowed. Thier function is mainly obzervative, knowing and curiosity sighting for researchers, visitors and anture admirers.
- Endangered Animals as the wild goats and pigs, martens, squirrels and otters, whose hunting should be banned for some time. Their areas are "areas prohibited by law”.
- Animals that are hunting objects as the rabbit, turtle and other birds within their hunting season. In addition to the free zones, are also defined the zones for their reproduction.¹³

These areas are scattered throughout rural environment of the county and constantly change whenever there is the need to create them. There is also leasing of forests and pastures (state property) with a goal of protection of wild fauna.

Ethnic-Cultural Offer

The district of Vlova counts for the biggest ethnographic unit of South Albania. Residents of these areas preserve rich traditions in the making of wool, stone, wood, straw, filigree and embroidery.¹⁴ This distric is an evidence of the past by preserving dozens of cultural and historical monuments. We can mention ancient towns of Amantia (Ploce), Orikos (Oricum), Himera (Himara), traces of the ancient walls of Aulona, the ancient city of Butrint (Buthrot), Phoinike (Finiqi). As archaeological values we can mention the castle Kanin (IV century BC), Porto Palermo (one of the most known castles throughout southern Albania), John Bocarin castle (XIV century), the castle of Himara (II century BC), the castle of Cerja, Ali Pasha's castle (Butrint), Mediterranean castle (Borshi), Castle of Onhezmi and Lekurs (Saranda), and Delvina castle. As historical monuments we mention: the Independence National Monument, Monument of Drashovica, the tomb of Ismail Kemal.¹⁵ In this geo-area are found many religious buildings with architectural, historical and tourist values such as Muradia Mosque (Vlore), Alex Gjin mosque in the village of Rusan (Delvin), church of Zverneci (Zvernec) the Church of

¹² *Profili i Qarkut të Vlorës*, Tiranë, 2003, faqe 21

¹³ Draçi B. “Potenciali turistik i rajonit Vjosë-Deti Jon” (Monografi). Tiranë, 1998, faqe 78

¹⁴ *Profili i Qarkut të Vlorës*, Tiranë, 2003, faqe 65

¹⁵ *Profili i Qarkut të Vlorës*, Tiranë, 2003, faqe 58

All the Saints (Himara), Church the Monastery of St. Nicholas in Mesopotam (Delvin), church of St. Spyridon (Vuno), Monastery church of the Forty Saints (Saranda) etc. All this historical and cultural heritage is accessible to local and foreign tourists at any time of the year

The Exploitation of the Holding Capacity of Geo-Space

The tourism in Albania especially in the district of Vlora is valued as an activity with intensive development and revenue potential. With the democratic changes that happened in Albania after 1990's, the tourism which was a neglected economical direction, started to develop really fast filling the tourism market needs.

Table 1¹⁶: Accomodation Units

Nr	Cities	Hotes / Vacation Houses /Flats	Number of Rooms	Number of Beds
1	Vlora	44	754	1693
2	Orikumi	31	458	1249
3	Himara	50	507	1533
4	Saranda	62	1202	2686
5	Qarku	187	2921	7161

As we see from table numer 2, the city of Saranda and after that the city of Vlora, have the highest number of beds for locals, compared to the region areas and those more remote. Performance of attendance in Vlora district region has been growing until 1997, falling, and again growing in 2000-2002 and now on. Attendance is better in the months July and August. There is a national and regional market that is growing. Vacationers are generally from Tirana, Kosovo, Macedonia, with a staying time from a week to a month.¹⁷ This has increased the revenues from tourism, but also the investment for it, enabling continuous improvement of living conditions of the population of the region.

Tourism and the Environment

Tourism is only one of the space occupayers. Besides the tourism, the space is used by primary and secondary economic activity; therefore all users must have the responsibility for spending and protecting the natural resources. When it comes to tourism as a major consumer of space, we keep in mind the fact that a tourist site occupies more space (territory) than an urban area with the same capacity.

Urban area of the city of Vlore in 1990 was 700 hectares inhabited territory and in 2000 amounted to 1,200 hectares inhabited territory. The population has continued to increased and from statistical data it results about 216,000 inhabitants and 106000 city residents.¹⁸ This migratory movement is characterized by a diffusion of constructions, which are without urban studies and have damaged the space adjustment plan. There is a degradation of the urban environment, the green areas invaded by illegal constructions.

Up to date controls in Vlora from the Environmental Inspectorate have found a number of problems concerning the environment, ranging from urban waste and pollution of the coast.

¹⁶ Të dhënat nga Zyra e Statistikës në Qarkun e Vlorës

¹⁷ *Profili i Qarkut Vlorë*, 2003, Tiranë, SHB Toena , faqe 128

¹⁸ Konferenca Shkencore "Mjedisi, turizmi dhe zhvillimi i qëndrueshëm i Rajonit të Vlorës", Vlorë 2004, fq 13

In each case the Environmental Inspectorate has concluded all cases where there is a violations law and environmental pollution, and has denounced these violations in the relevant institutions. There are also taken measures for port clearance firms that deal with treatment of lubricating oils. In the case of identification of the authors, the Environmental Inspectorate has set fines based on environmental legislation.

Vlora is a country that according to its geographical position has a high biological, flora and fauna variation. The UNDP project "Conservation of wetlands and coastal ecosystems in the Mediterranean region" applies to this variety.¹⁹ In order to have an economic and tourist development, the geo-area of Vlora District should effectively develop activities that use modern clean technologies where the environmental impact is minimal, not to have any contamination in the environment and to preserve the natural balance.

CONCLUSIONS

Vlora region has a very convenient geographical position (junction of east and west movements).

Its coastline is 144 km from the total of 1094 km in the country.

From the geological point of view it should be noted that the formation of this specific area is related to building "serious" tourist structures.

The slope of the landscape is a phenomenon that allows development of different types of tourism (medical, marin, water, mountains, cultural, speleological, underwater, etc.) within a small area and it guarantees favorable climate for sunbathing (120 days with full sun, second place behind Spain).

There are a lot of virgin and unused environments, with natural complex and the young population has traditions, history, gastronomy of traditional and modern cooking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promotion of measures for implementation of master plans for tourism development.
- Supports the tourism infrastructure.
- Supports the national strategy for tourism, supports law enforcement and legal packages for tourist areas.
- Cooperation with local governments, central regional initiatives and business incentives that propel local and regional resources.

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