



## **ABSTRACT**

This study presents a plan for the development of tourism in Korça County, Albania. It covers the historical background, what the present situation is, what the most likely developments will be, what potential exists, and what actions should be included in any further tourism master plan. Through an analysis of the development of tourism in a number of nations and regions with similar challenges (China, Hong Kong, Turkey, Dubai, and Greece), tourism in Eastern and Central Europe, and in particular, tourism in the Balkans, the study provides a comparative framework for examining the ways in which the transformation of the tourism industry may take place. This comparative study, along with an intensive examination of the history of the problems associated with tourism development in Albania, offers a better understanding of the Albanian tourism process and potential with the hope of eliminating past mistakes and developing a strategy that limits the potentially negative effects of tourism while maximizing the benefit to the region.

A TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR KORÇA COUNTY,  
ALBANIA

by

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## Introduction

Tourism development is an economic and social necessity. Identifying issues that limit its potential is a very important step toward future improvements. This study is an effort that aims at providing a clear strategy to develop tourism, focusing specifically on Korça County in Albania, an area that has great tourism potential. Albania is located in southeastern Europe, in the western Balkans. It has a population of 3,619,778 and the total area is 28,748 sq km (Biba, et al, 2009). This plan will contribute to the preservation and development of the historic, artistic, and cultural traditions of the region, stimulating a healthy development of the tourism industry. The economic and social context in Albania makes this plan a difficult challenge. Nevertheless, a well-organized strategy with clear goals can put into gear the tourism development of Korça County and this study may be seen as the basis for a future Action Plan which will allow for regional improvements. My work will emphasize the importance of the following actions:

- Raising awareness within the Korça County community of the socio-economic importance of tourism development;
- Collecting tourism data and anticipating tourist behavior;
- Analyzing the tourism industry and its market;
- Improving the tourism product and its components, including transportation services, accommodations, and entertainment venues;
- Training professionals to offer high quality service;
- Developing a marketing and promotion strategy.

A well-planned strategy is an important factor in this billion-dollar industry. We are already aware of how important tourism is to the economic development of a country. We should also be aware of the negative effects that it might bring, such as overcrowding, prostitution, crime, environmental degradation, and the loss of the authenticity of cultural traditions (Duggan, 1992). This study will help to offer a better understanding of the tourism process in Albania from different perspectives with the hope of eliminating the past mistakes and developing a future strategy that limits the negative effects but at the same time puts Albania in the tourism market.

## **Methodology**

The main purpose of this study is to assess the tourism performance in Korça County and create the basis for a future development plan. The planned methods to achieve it were through interviews, surveys, and literature review. The main goal has been to measure tourism progress, identify areas that need attention, and strengthen the bond between consumers and the tourism industry that Korça County has to offer.

The bulk of the paper derives from an extensive literature review using online and print resources. It helps in developing a general picture of tourism in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and more detailed information on Albania and Korça County. The plan was to combine the literature review and the data collected through the interview and survey as more likely to produce a rich qualitative study.

For this reason, the intention at the beginning of the study was to gather information not only from the literature review but also through interviews and surveys. The plan was to conduct five interviews with individuals whose views are relevant to the tourism issue. They were selected because of their interest and involvement in tourism. Since their professional position is important to the subject, and since their views are significant, they were to be identified by name and position title. However, I was going to send to them a preliminary text with my summary of their response so that they could correct any mistakes that I might have made in understanding their perspective. After getting approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Utica College, letters of consent were emailed to the selected interviewers. Only two out of five released permission to be

interviewed and were willing to collaborate in this study even though all had previously agreed verbally. Due to the long distance I proposed that the interviews be done by means of Skype, an Internet-based program that allows televised conversations, but the subjects requested that the questions be emailed. After receiving the fifteen questions, none of them replied. Although several attempts were made to finalize the interviews there was no response.

The study also used a survey design to assess Korça County Tourism Development. It was delivered to thirteen anonymous individuals who are involved in tourism. The sample for the survey was not selected through a random technique but a purposive consideration. The subjects were all located in Albania. The survey was delivered through an on-line survey program, Survey Monkey, with the help of the Utica College Academic Affair Office. It contained fourteen items, such as profile questions, multiple choice questions, a rating scale, and room for comments. Like the interview, letters of consent were emailed after getting the IRB approval. Only two out of thirteen agreed to participate. Their responses will be discussed in “A Plan for Tourism Development in Korça County”. The interview and the survey protocols are available in the Appendix I.

The fact that very few of the people who had agreed to be involved in my study actually followed-through with their agreement not only make this research difficult to carry out, but it is an example of an Albanian attitude and the way Albanians deal with foreign collaborators as well. As I will explain later, this phenomenon comes as a result of lack of professionalism and serious commitment. I will refer to it as the “S’ka Problem [No Problem]” attitude. Generally speaking, Albanian business partner(s) are very eager to collaborate with any foreign investors, but while the project is underway they fail to

fulfill their duties as partners by neglecting to do what is required and what they had promised. As a result the collaboration might fail and the investments will be transferred to a more reliable country.

## **Tourism Development: Some Examples from Around the World**

Worldwide, tourism is an important socio-economic activity. It has become a mass activity for the developed world, and at the same time a social necessity for the underdeveloped world. Tourism affects dimensions of social life such as the economy, environmental activity, culture, society, and politics. It should be considered one of the main sources of national income, and through the tourism industry there are more chances for members of the community to increase their own incomes. The cases of China, Hong Kong, Turkey, Dubai, and Greece reflect the economic importance of tourism and offer examples of how Albania should build its tourism development plan, either by implementing the successful strategies of some of these countries or avoiding some of their mistakes. Albanians need to expand their knowledge about tourism issues. A good way to do this is by familiarizing themselves with what other countries have done. Albania is not a unique case. There are other countries in the world that share similar advantages and disadvantages in the tourism industry. Some of these countries have managed to transform their tourism sites into international destinations, bringing considerable profits to the economy. The following cases will illustrate some successful examples that might suggest solutions for overcoming the current difficulties in Albania, making tourism development real. As a result, Albania has the necessity to learn from the mistakes of others and come up with a better way to avoid problems.

One of these countries is China. During the Communist period Albania and China built the so-called China-Albania Friendship (1970-1978). Due to this, they shared their cultural, economical and political experiences. After breaking with the People's Republic

of China, the Albanian dictator, Enver Hoxha<sup>1</sup>, focused on the principle of self-reliance to sustain his country. Currently Albania is one of the poorest countries in Europe, while during 2006, according to Farhoomand and Huang (2008), China was ranked fourth among the most popular destinations for international tourists. In their article, “China’s Interlaken: Competitive Advantage through Cultural Replication,” they show how the reproduction of Switzerland’s Interlaken, a Western-themed park, can be a smart strategy to attract tourists. Its location was perfect. It was surrounded by mountains and the sea, and it was close to the highway and railway network, and thus it was ideal for cultural tourism, sport tourism, and ecotourism. In this case China not only offered something new, but carefully modeled it after a successful tourism venue.

Another example is offered by “Hong Kong Disneyland” (HKD) (Liu & Young 2007). It is the third park that Disney opened outside of the United States, after the Tokyo Disney Resort and Disneyland Paris Resort (Liu & Young, 2007, pg.1). The reasons they chose Hong Kong instead of China were because

the Chinese infrastructure was still substandard by world standards and the Chinese currency was not fully convertible. Hong Kong, however, had a world-class infrastructure and a reputation as an international financial center. Most importantly, Hong Kong has always been a gateway to China. Hong Kong, with its unusual blend of east and west, of Chinese roots and British colonial heritage, of ultramodern sophistication and ancient traditions, is one of the most diverse and exciting cities in the world (Liu & Young, 2007, pg. 5).

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<sup>1</sup>Enver Hoxha was the Communist leader of Albania from the end of World War II until his death in 1985.

Also, tourism has been one of the major “pillars” of the Hong Kong economy. In 2005, the total number of visitors was more than 23 million, a new record and about a 7.1% increase over 2004 (pg.5).

Two years after its opening to visitors, however, HKD has fallen short of meeting its targeted figures. According to the Hong Kong Disneyland official site (n. d.), the 2007 attendance was up at the park by almost 8%, but attendance actually decreased 23% in its third year of operation (already falling short of the 5.6 million expected visitors) to just over 4 million in the 2007 (Tang, 2007). This makes it by far the worst performing Disney Park.

One issue that is creating difficulties for HKD is the poor quality of products. Blogs on the Internet revealed many complaints about the products and service. People have expressed their disappointment since opening day because HKD could not accommodate the number of visitors predicted by Disney officials. They also claim that the rides are falling apart and there is not much that children can do. Most important, the food does not offer a great variety and there are no children’s meals. Consumers who have the ability to pay a considerable amount just for entertainment expect international-standard products. According to Rein (2008), who is the Managing Director of the China Market Research Group, “Disney has not been aggressive enough about quality control, so that Disney products stay expensive while quality gets worse and worse.” Under such circumstances they will never win the sympathy of the customers, and will not encourage them to come back. Yet, Kester (2009) claims, in *Tourism 2020 Vision*, that Hong Kong itself will become one of the top tourism destinations.



Vietor and Thompson (2004) offer another case to be taken into consideration, Turkey. The Republic of Albania has experienced almost the same situations as Turkey, such as crises, political instability, and difficulties with the repayment of debt, and like Turkey it is working hard to meet European Union (EU) standards. The difference is that Albania has been slower in achieving these long-term goals than Turkey. Both countries have had difficulties with economic development due to the lack of mechanized industry and a business élite willing to invest. Long-term economic fragility is the result of lack of political stability. These circumstances make both countries less attractive to investors. Yet, Turkey is in a better political and economic shape than Albania. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (n.d.), the views and policy approaches of the two countries on regional and international issues are almost identical, and the relation between the two countries is excellent. However, Turkey is more developed than Albania in the tourism industry because of a higher quality of services and better prices. Also, the Turkish community is more involved in the process and more aware of the importance of tourism than Albanians. Most important, Turkey has gained more experience due to the fact that it has historically been an empire and highly influential in religious, political, and economic development. It has also been exposed to many more ups and downs than Albania has.

Turkey is attracting more and more tourists from outside the country, not only because it has the potential but also because the institutions in charge of tourism and the government know how to sell the tourism product, combining the right price with good quality. According the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, from January to June 2010 Turkey attracted more than 11 million foreign tourists (n. d.). The Ministry of

Culture, Tourism, Youth, and Sports of Albania has not published any tourism statistic so far for 2010, but if we refer to the January-June 2009 date, Albania attracted only 522,167 foreign tourists (Ministry of Culture, 2009). Although the number increased during the summer, it still remain quite low compared to Turkey.

The next case study focuses on Dubai. It is important to understand how a state like Dubai, located in a region famous for instability, has managed to overcome a bad reputation and build an economy that mostly depends on tourism. Like the Middle East, with its bad reputation concerning safety and regional terrorism, Albania has a major disadvantage in the negative reputation that circulates in the world, depicting the country, and the Balkan region generally, as unstable and hazardous. Yet Dubai, one of the seven states that makes up the United Arab Emirates, managed to attract 12 million visitors during 2005 (Dillon & Matly, 2007). Due to the government's vision, Dubai attracted millions of tourists in a short period, and it has become a destination of choice.

According to Dillon and Matly there are three reasons why: the speed with which they work in the construction field, the preservation of culture, and the collaboration between government and institutions involved in the tourism industry (pg. 6). As Goetzmann and Tavis specify in "Dubailand: Destination Dubai" (2006), "Dubai has been blessed with core competences such as visionary leadership, an action-oriented society, a model government-private sector partnership and highly trained human resources" (pg. 5). This is one of many reasons why Dubai has placed itself on the global map as an economic power and tourist destination. Cases like Dubai are a positive tourism development model for countries like Albania. Although they are different in many ways, they share the same vision of tourism development as a generator for the economy. For many, the economic

growth of Albania seems light years away from Dubai standards. Even though Albania offers many places where the tourists are welcomed, still few tourists come and fewer still are willing to return.

Even though comparisons between Albania and Dubai are not perfect, we should also not ignore Dubai's problems in order to prevent the same unpleasant situations. It is true that due to the pace of development Dubai's growth rate is one of the highest in the world. Yet, speed sometimes can result in poor quality construction, which will lead to problems in the future and the necessity of further expenditures in the repair process. Another problem often discussed in respect to Dubai is labor abuse. Human Rights Watchers have expressed their indignation about the way Sheik Mohamed and the United Arab Emirates government treats the working class (Dillon & Matly 2007). The government has done little to protect the workers' rights.

On November 2009, Dubai declared itself to be in a deep financial crisis. Dubai World<sup>2</sup>, one of the biggest global corporations, had a debt of about \$59 billion in its financial sector (Bhatt, 2009), and the Emirates are immersed in a debt of \$80 billion due to rapid expansion in banking, real estate and transportation (All about Greece, 2010). Due to this unstable financial situation the UAE is facing a drop in property sales and, as a result, half of the construction projects have either been put on hold or even cancelled (Bhatt, 2009). Consequently companies have been forced to close and workers have been

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<sup>2</sup>“Global holding conglomerate Dubai World focuses on the strategic growth areas of Transport & Logistics, Drydocks & Maritime, Urban Development, Investment and Financial Services. It contains some of the world's leading companies in their industries, including Drydocks World, Economic Zones World, Istithmar World, Nakheel and majority ownership of Dubai Ports World.” (Dubai World, n.d.)

laid off. Madhi Matter, chief economist at SHUAA Capital<sup>3</sup>, declared that investors are now skeptical about Dubai's future and are still worried during this crisis (IANS, 2009). Dubai's crisis is a major issue because it has not only affected the Emirates but India as well. Dubai is a job market for many Indian families and half of the country's remittances derive from the UAE (IANS, 2009).

To resolve this outrageous situation, in December 2009 Abu Dhabi stepped in with \$10 billion package, \$4.1 billion of which was allocated to Dubai World to take care of its immediate debt obligation, said Sheikh Ahmad Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman of the Dubai Supreme Fiscal Committee (IANS, 2009). Despite the crisis, Dubai has not lost its importance in regard to tourism and the analysts predict that it will mature Dubai and lead it toward a more sustainable growth.

All that glitters isn't gold and Greece, like Dubai, proves it. Although Greece had economic growth from 2000 to 2007 and an increase of foreign investment in the country, this did not make it invulnerable during the 2008 global financial crisis. On the contrary, Greece is one of the countries that were most severely hit and tourism is one of the most highly affected industries. In January 2010 Greece's debt was estimated €261 billion. The Greek government had paid Goldman Sachs and several banks hundreds of millions of dollars to cover up the real level of borrowings since 2001 (All about Greece, 2010). The country is going bankrupt. The government hopes that tax hikes and spending cuts will resolve the problem, but they are only bringing massive protests all around the country. Other countries, whose economies are on the edge of bankruptcy, such as

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<sup>3</sup>“SHUAA Capital is a public shareholding company regulated by the UAE Central Bank and listed on the Dubai Financial Market. HUAA Capital provides a broad range of financial services to corporations, governments, institutional clients, and high net worth individuals.” (SHUAA, n.d.)

Portugal with a deficit of 11.4% of GDP, Ireland at 14.3% of GDP, and Spain 11.2% at of GDP, might fail in the same way as Greece. This has forced the European Union (EU) to reevaluate not only the Eurozone and the members of the EU, but also the new applicants' countries, one of which is Albania. The crises will not only bring instability in the continent, but also less chance for Albania to be accepted in EU.

Despite the harsh global financial situation, investments in tourism must not stop. Albania's future strategy should be developed around the need to learn from the experiences of other countries and to develop a plan that avoids the mistakes and follows the successful examples.

Overall, if considered carefully, these cases provide elements for a more detailed and successful tourism development plan for Albania. The case of China suggests the possibility and importance of implementing new ideas and inspires creativity. Hong Kong has the potential and the new ideas, but it sometimes lacks the right people to succeed, at least as exemplified by the experience of Hong Kong Disneyland. Turkey, on the other hand, presents a positive example to be followed. The Turkish government has proved to be an asset in the development of the tourism potential of the country because it knows how to manage and promote tourism (something that seems very difficult in Albania).

The case of Dubai is more mixed in results. Dubai overcame the regional conflicts and image and built an economy mainly dependent on tourism, but, although Dubai is listed among the most powerful economies in the world, it could not stop the financial crises that hit it recently. Excessive ambition brought poor quality construction, abuse of the labor force, and a too-rapid expansion in banking, real estate and transportation.

Like Dubai, Greece is going through a harsh economic downfall. Since 2001 the Greek government managed to hide its real level of borrowings and presented to the world the appearance of successful development, but in reality the country is going bankrupt. Cases like Dubai and Greece serve as a warning to the Albanian government of the need for flexibility, transparency, accountability, and rigorous democratic participation to avoid as much as possible the mistakes of these two countries.

## **General Considerations on Tourism in Europe and the Balkans**

Tourism should not be considered as an isolated issue from everything else that goes on in the international, national, and regional arena. It is important to take a look at Europe and, in particular, the Balkans because in one way or another they can have a great influence political and economic development in Albania.

Relevant to the Albanian situation is the report *Tourism 2020 Vision* by the Kester (2009), which provides a long-term forecast and also presents an account of what has been done with tourism from 1995 to 2009. Experience has shown that this forecast was correct in many of its predictions, at least in the short term, such as which would be the top tourist destinations and the origin of international tourists. Based on recent data gathered from the same report, in the coming years the regions near the Mediterranean Sea will be the top destination for a great number of international tourists. Albania is located in a favorable position, which will enable it to take advantage of this trend. Generally speaking, Albania is already blessed with some of the right elements to succeed in tourism, but it requires work and preparation, as well as the management of that potential. Thus, it is important to develop a tourism plan which will result in a well-prepared tourism policy for the upcoming years.

The latest report published by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) 2009 *International Tourism Results and Prospect for 2010* (2010) indicates that, although the world has gone through a harsh global economic crisis, WTO specialists are convinced that 2010 will see a growth of 3% to 4 % more international tourists than 2009. Compared to 2008, last year had 4.3% fewer international tourists. The only destination

that had a growth in international tourists was Africa with 5% more than in 2008. Europe and the Middle East were the regions with the least international tourist arrivals for 2009, and both of them attracted 6% less than in 2008. The subregion of Central and Eastern Europe attracted fewer tourists than any other subregion, 8% less than 2008. The following chart shows the results from 1996 to 2009 for the world:

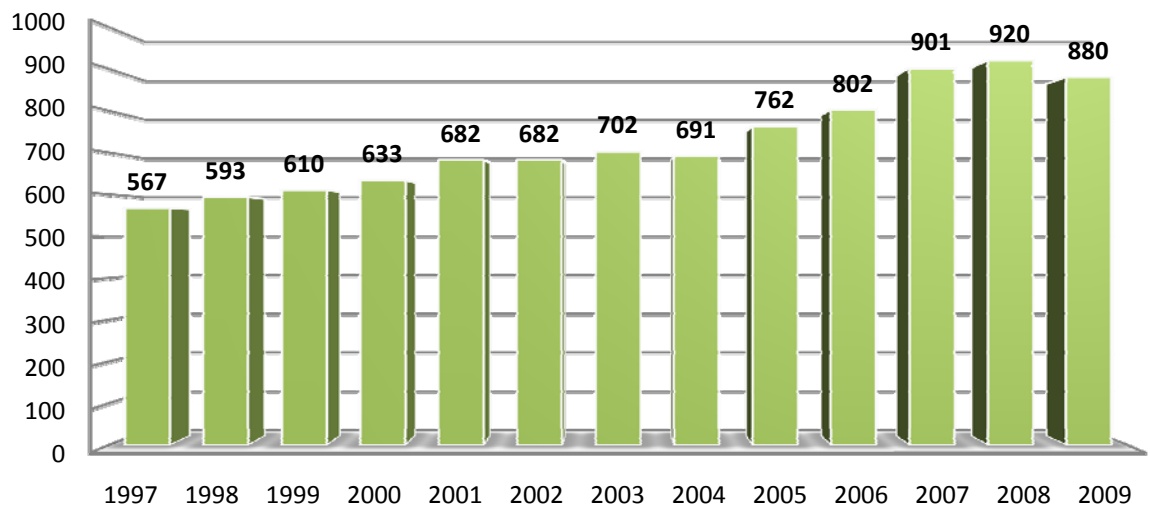


Chart 1 *International Tourist Arrivals 1996-2009(million)*

Note. The data on tourist arrivals 1996-2009 are retrieved from "International Tourism Results and Prospect for 2010 " by World tourism Organisation (2010).

*Tourism and Environment in European Countries* (Ellul, 1996) is another interesting report that focuses on more specific issue such as the impact of tourism on the environment. It examines tourist development in Europe during the second half of the 20th century, identifies initiatives that have positively affected tourism, and gives recommendations on how to improve the tourism industry without damaging the environment. Some of the recommendations are as follows (pg.11);

- Rehabilitation of damaged areas and introduction of measures to prevent further erosion and degradation of environment resources;



- Introduction of fiscal and other control measures to direct private investments towards environmentally conscious investments and to prevent environmental degradation by imposing fines on polluters;
- Carrying capacity studies.

It also reflects on the importance of tourism, how it has influenced life-styles, and how it has changed the economies of many countries. According to Kester's "Vision 2020," the number of international tourist arrivals will reach 1.56 billion by 2020. Europe will hold the highest level of participation in international tourism (pg. 5). This suggests where to orient a marketing plan for Albania, though not to the extent of excluding other countries from the marketing strategy. Europe will remain the most visited touristic destination "in terms of absolute numbers" (pg. 5). This contradicts the WTO tourism results (2010); nevertheless, any Albanian tourism agency should focus on making Albania known in the dominant tourism market. Eastern European countries have some common features in their history. Analyzing the path that these countries have undertaken to be where they are will help to find where Albania has gone wrong so far and what needs to be done in the near future.

Ellul, supported by the Council of Europe, sheds light on some successful regional stories, such as the Czech Republic. Like Albania, Czech Republic is going through a transitional economy. It was 8th in the top 10 European countries in regard to tourism arrivals during 1996 (pg. 8). The report summarized tourism's negative and positive impacts in the Czech Republic. The government, assisted by institutions involved in tourism, managed to make Prague a permanent tourist site, and at the same time offer

many job opportunities, mostly seasonal. It also implemented a new tourism policy aimed at the development of less known but attractive sites. All this process has its disadvantages, which were reflected, for instance, in the damage to vegetation by the widening the roads. Mass tourism brought car pollution and the widening of car parking spaces, which were a threat to other national park areas (pg. 12). Ellul identifies the lack of environmental training before and during the time of the report. Nevertheless Prague succeeded in becoming one of the top tourist destinations in Europe. This created many job opportunities, improved regional policies, and transformed unfamiliar sites into attractive places for the tourists.

For a better understanding of Central and Eastern Europe tourism, Derek R. Hall has published several studies that explore the past and the recent tourism situation and its progress. “Sustainable Tourism Development and Transformation in Central and East Europe” (2000) focuses on three important aspects. First, it discusses the geographical position and political situations that are relevant to sustainable tourism development in Central and Eastern Europe and the need to keep a sustainable level of tourism without exhausting natural resources or causing severe ecological damage. In Eastern Europe international tourism did not flourish under Communism; most of the tourists came from other Communist countries, whereas domestic tourism was usually for urban workers and their families (pg. 446). After the collapse of Communism, the attitudes and the laws toward tourism changed. The borders were open now to the rest of the world, which brought to Eastern European societies a new mentality. Visitors were free to come and visit Eastern Europe and, in the case of Albania, they were freed from the heavy restrictions that were implemented during the Communism time.

A second aspect of Hall's study concerns the issues related to tourism development and the management of tourism potential in the region, focusing on aspects of rural tourism and heritage. He discusses the benefits of rural tourism and the services that it offers, such as carpentry, silversmithing, textile production, and pottery production. Finally, the study summarizes and compares the past Communist experiences in several nations and regions, using the work of Puczko and Ratz on Hungary; Jordan on Croatia; Verbole on Slovenia; Holland on Southern Albania; and Simpson and Roberts on Central Eastern Europe in general. Generally speaking, the post-Communist countries are referred to as being "in transition." Their attempts to shift from central economic planning to a market economy and the ambition to be integrated in the European Union (EU) are part of this transition period. According to Hall, for countries like Albania the transition process is made difficult by the presence of some Communist-period institutions, practices, and mentalities that are not willing to give a chance to the newer generation that is of the proper age to lead.

The collapse of Communist governments was associated with "weak enforcement of environmental legislation, fiscal uncertainty, and inadequate information about environment damage" (pg. 444). All over Europe, the necessity to protect nature has been emphasized. The situation in the Central Eastern Europe<sup>4</sup> countries differs from Western Europe because the transformation process has been different. In addition, accession to the EU has led to a new regulatory framework to which national legislation has had to be

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<sup>4</sup>Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine.

adapted. In the case of Albania, the country needs to meet the EU requirements and the government is working in that direction.

Hall carries on the same discussion in his book *Tourism and Transition: Governance, Transformation, and Development* (2004). He examines the relationship between the government and the tourism industry in the time when Albania was under Communist control and explains why Albania is still in a stage of economic infancy. He relates this situation to the restrictions imposed by the dictatorship. Hall also claims that the old traditional family and clan honor customs have restrained tourism development. Women were not free to travel and to choose a holiday destination. He identifies the tourism problems related to the transition from authoritarian rule to a liberal democratic economic and political system by making comparisons with societies from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the Central and Eastern Mediterranean, Central Asia, China, and South Africa that have been through the same path of transition. He explains the lack of development as being a result of economic instability and inefficiency.

Based on accounts in newspapers, magazine articles, and advertisements Hall collected the following taglines for the countries in CEE (pg. 41): Albania – “Land of sun and hospitality”; Croatia – “Small country for a great holiday”; Czech Republic – “In the heart of Europe”; and others. He refers to the marketing message and logo as an important tool to attract international tourists and investors. Investors are unwilling to risk their money in an unstable region like CEE, but Hall argues that nonetheless Central and South-Eastern Europe has the potential to emerge from this instability. In his paper, “Tourism Development and Sustainability Issue in Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe” (1998), he analyses tourism development and the post-Communist

reconstruction process in CEE. According to him, rural tourism is a vehicle for sustainable development in South-eastern Europe. The example that the author brings to support his idea is the case of the villages in southern Albania where the habitants are trying to refurbish traditional homes for small-scale tourism purposes. Also, they have returned to the local craft artifacts as a source of incomes.

Hall provides statistics about the number of international tourist arrivals during 1990-1995 in CEE (1998). The most visited country is Hungary, while the least visited is Macedonia, followed by Serbia-Montenegro and Albania.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1  
*International tourist arrivals 1990-1995 (in millions)*

|                          | 1990  | 1991  | 1992  | 1993  | 1994  | 1995  |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Albania</b>           | 0.03  | 0.13  | 0.28  | 0.45  | 0.28  | 0.40  |
| <b>Bulgaria</b>          | 4.50  | 4.00  | 3.75  | 3.83  | 3.90  | 3.47  |
| <b>Czech Republic</b>    | 7.28  | 7.57  | 10.90 | 11.50 | 17.00 | 16.50 |
| <b>Croatia</b>           | 7.05  | 1.35  | 1.27  | 1.52  | 2.29  | 1.32  |
| <b>Hungary</b>           | 20.51 | 21.86 | 20/19 | 22/80 | 21.43 | 20.69 |
| <b>Macedonia</b>         | 0.56  | 0.29  | 0.22  | 0.21  | 0.19  | 0.15  |
| <b>Poland</b>            | 3.40  | 11.35 | 16.20 | 17.00 | 18.80 | 19.20 |
| <b>Romania</b>           | 3.01  | 3.00  | 3.80  | 2.91  | 2.80  | 2.61  |
| <b>Serbia-Montenegro</b> | 1.19  | 0.38  | 0.16  | 0.08  | 0.09  | 0.10  |
| <b>Slovakia</b>          | 0.82  | 0.62  | 0.57  | 0.65  | 0.90  | 0.90  |
| <b>Slovenia</b>          | 0.65  | 0.25  | 0.62  | 0.62  | 0.75  | 0.73  |

*Note.* The data are retrieved from “Tourism Development and Sustainability Issue in Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe” (Hall, 1998). The original source is World Tourism Organization (1996).

Hall divides these countries into two groups: more advanced (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia) and less developed (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania). For the second group he argues that those countries are characterized by a considerable tourism potential that is neglected in the literature. The media do not always

<sup>5</sup>In another table in the same publication that deals with travel abroad there are no data about Albania at all. The author states that by 1994 the outbound rates for Albania were minuscule (officially at least).

represent the region well, so that its reputation continues to be characterized by economic, political, and cultural instability. Under Communist regimes in the countries in the second group “the culture heritage promotion was not intended to be for the international tourists, but was aimed to reinforce a sense of identity and pride among each urban citizen and to act as a strong reminder of their rural roots” (pg. 428). Hall claims that today the tendency for the first group is to emphasize its Central European credentials and to distance itself from any “Balkan” association. This is clear evidence of the desire of countries in this group to join the EU and everything associated with it. Tourism development will help them to make this process easier because through it they will meet some of the EU economic requirements. The advantages they will gain by joining the EU are membership of a single market, which will increase competitiveness; free movement of citizens, which will result in more job opportunities around the EU; grants and other financial support; better representation in the international arena; more awareness of humans and worker rights; and better rules and regulations to avoid corruption. Albania is expected to join the EU in 2015.

What happened to Albania and how have past events influenced the path to integration with Europe? Many researchers had difficulties finding the right answer when they focused their work during the Communist or immediate post-Communist period. The lack of publication creates a gap of information. This is the case of Gianari’s book *The Economies of the Balkan Countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia* (1982). While analyzing the other Balkan countries’ economies, in addition to Albania, he claims that the main problems of the economies of Greece, Turkey, and the former Yugoslavia are inflation, unemployment, and unfair distribution

of income and wealth. On the other hand, the economies of Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania face the problems of low production incentives, inadequate consumer choices, and inefficient resource allocation (pg. 5).

Gianari focuses on the establishment of the Balkan states and their expansion, and he starts with Albania. He gives the history on how Albania was “born,” continues with other significant historical events, such as the five hundred years of Ottoman domination, the proclamation of independence in November 1912, the creation of the present boundaries during the negotiation of the Treaty of London in 1913, the National Liberation Movement during WWII, and ends with the situation during Hoxha’s regime (pg. 30-33). This helps the reader to gain an understanding of the historical aspects of Albania and its identity, and to understand the stages that the country went through. These historical events are important aspects that have influenced future economic development in Albania and other Balkan countries.

One significant part of Gianari’s analysis is when he discusses the tourism issue in the Balkan countries and makes comparisons between Bulgaria Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia tourism revenues. Apparently there is no evidence about Albania and the author does not give any explanation as to why he does not include any data about tourism revenues in Albania. Gianari is not alone in this regard. Many authors provide either no or very scanty information about Albania, in response no doubt to the difficulty of accessing information and statistics easily. Overall from the literature the image that emerges of Albania is one of darkness and mystery.

Considered as a whole, the literature documents the transformation of Europe and the Balkans with respect to tourism. Other European (especial Eastern European and Balkan)

countries have similar characteristics to Albania and the literature helps bring to the fore new possibilities for Albanian development. Over time, European and the Balkan nations have established their strategies. Some countries have advanced more and some less, but in all cases they constitute a lesson to be learned for a country like Albania, which is still in its transitional phase. Meantime, the amount of literature available for this topic is limited. Reports conducted by World Tourism Organization, Council of Europe, and Hall's publications have contributed to some extent in filling this lack of data. These publications helped by comparing Albania with similar conditions in some Central Eastern European (CEE) countries. By analyzing and comparing the ex-Communist countries light is shed on the condition inherited from Communism and how it has affected economic, political, and social life. In his studies Hall goes into detail about CEE tourism, considering it an economic tool that is transforming this part of Europe. He highlights the importance of sustainable tourism and refers to the government as an important tool to boost tourism development and, thereby, meet the European Union economic requirements. This study of Europe and the Balkans and the understanding of the framework in which tourism transformation has taken place, can contribute to formulating proposals for the tourism development plan for Albania.



## General Considerations on Tourism in Albania

Although Albania is part of the CEE and the Balkans, it manages to preserve its distinctiveness. Throughout the centuries, Albanians were noted for their strong feelings of nationalism. Albanians justify this pride with the assertion that Albanian is the oldest language in the region, and that this country has produced distinguished personalities such as Mother Teresa, Ismail Kadare, and John Belushi. As Todorova explains in her book, *Imagining the Balkans* (2009), famous travelers like Edith Durham and Edward Lear experienced Albania and through their works they introduced it to the Western world. Todorova work has important historical examples that support the idea that Albania has always been an interesting tourist destination, such as the case of Edward Lear, the British painter, who was inspired by the Albanian scenery in the 1840s, and Edith Durham, who undertook a trip in Albania during 1913. During her trip in the Albania highlands, Durham fell in love with the country and the people there. The problem that Durham met during her visit is the same problematic issue that frightens many international tourists from visiting Albania – the fear of violence. This distorted stereotype has negatively affected the tourism industry. Instead of being known for its old and rich history, the world thinks of Albania as a dangerous place to be in. Actually, this is only a stereotype. According to Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008), “surprising as it may be, the Balkan region is one of the safest in Europe.” On the other hand, David Rothkopf lists the European Union collectively as 8<sup>th</sup> among the 10 most dangerous countries in the world, and this shows that great threats can come even from those who have means to preserve stability, but do not (2009).

The following extract from the Todorova book shows that, while this stereotype has been in circulation for a long time, it needs to be kept in perspective. Edith Durham was told by the Albanians that:

... You think in England you are civilized, and can teach us. I tell you there is no one here that would commit crimes as are found in London... Our brigands are poor men. By working hard in the fields they can only just live. They are quite ignorant, and have never been to school. They rob to live, and do so at the risk of their lives. But your brigands have often been to a university, and rob to obtain luxuries by lies and false promises. You have had all the advantages of education and civilization for years, and this is what you do. But you call us savages... (pg.121)

Travel is the activity that best formulates our understanding of tourism, and Durham's traveling experiences are worth listening to. The Albanians she describes are the people one will meet even today. They are certainly very hospitable and their attitude is guest-oriented. Accommodating and honoring the guest is an old Albanian tradition. It is known as "*besa*," which means "the word of honor." It is a concept encountered in *Kanun i Lek Dukagjinit (The Canon of Lek Dukagjin)*<sup>6</sup> "developed" by Lek Dukagjini around the 15th century, which made *besa* one of its four pillars. "*Besa*" refers to the importance of respecting and protecting guests. The Canon is considered to be a regulator for community and private life. It was orally transmitted from one generation to another until the Franciscan Shtjefën Gjeçov collected and published it in 1933. It is divided into twelve

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<sup>6</sup>A book with rules or laws that set the framework of the life-style in the north territories of Albania from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until now.

parts: “The Church,” “The Family,” “Marriage,” “The House, Cattle, and Property,” “Work,” “Loans,” “Pledge,” “Honor,” “Damages,” “The Canon against Harm,” “The Canon of Judgment,” “Exemptions and Exceptions” (Mangalakova, 2004, pg. 2). It has been followed in the regions of Northern Albania until the present, particularly in rural areas (mostly due to the inaccessible terrain). Although the ideas in the *Kanun* are characteristic of other Balkan countries, it survived among Albanians the longest due to the fact that they have lived longer in a patriarchal society, a form of social organization that fits best with the customary laws of the *Kanun* (Trnavci, n. d.). For a long period of time it had priority over any other kind of legal system. During the Hoxha dictatorship it was banned, but democracy brought the Canon back in a distorted form. In an interview with the Albanian painter Shpend Bengu, conducted by Mustafa Nano in the talk show *Dëjà Vu*, Bengu declared that after 1945 the pseudo Marxist-Leninist researchers of the Albanian Science Academy published misinterpreted retellings of Gjeçov’s version of the Canon (Bengu, personal communication, February, 2009). These days the Canon has a connotation of crime and blood feud because many crimes in Albania are claimed to have happened in the name of the Canon. Based on 2007 statistics the

lives of 6000 Albanians have been taken with self-justice. Over 20,000 families were involved in sharp conflicts causing most of them to confine themselves.

These families' children have abandoned school and have been confined for years inside the house, without being able to meet their friends and the relatives even for a moment.” (Albanian Canadian, 2008).

Gjin Marku, the Chairman of the Committee of Nationwide Reconciliation, claims that there are 12 major problematic counties in Albanian with a total of 1310 families

suffering from blood feud and 1277 children that have no access to education. In reality the Canon condemns any act of violence against children and women. One of the purposes of the Canon was to preserve the identity of the Albanians of that period, but now it is not only misunderstood and misused but it is even adjusted to accommodate the personal needs of the individual.

The Canon itself is a fascinating book that preserves the old traditional Albanian customs. In one of the codes the Canon requires that “the Albanians’ house belongs to God and guests” (Mangalakova, 2004, pg. 5). Therefore, all guests in Albania are treated with high respect. Albanians have not abandoned these customs even in times when their lives were threatened. Shirley Cloyes DioGuardi’s article “Jewish Survival in Albania & the Ethics of *Besa*” (2006) recounts “that in the early 1930s, there were about 200 Jews living in Albania. At the end of World War II, there were close to 2,000 Jews living in Albania – the only nation that can claim that every Jew within its borders was rescued from the Holocaust” (pg.7). The reason that drove Albanians to the rescue of Jews has mainly to do with the Canon and the code of *besa*. DioGuardi associates *besa* with several meanings,

ranging from faith, inviolable trust, truce, and word of honor to a sacred promise and obligation to keep one’s word to offer hospitality and protection. Also, it involves uncompromising protection of a guest even to the point of risking one’s own life (pg.8).

Taking into consideration that societies evolve and that our target is mass tourism, accommodating and honoring the guest, or as Albanians would say *besa*, is not sufficient to attract the attention of tourists and make them return. Obviously, *besa* is an advantage

in the tourism industry because Albanians have a natural tendency to make the guests and visitors feel at home. Nevertheless, Albania needs to undertake important reforms in the quality of service and human resources if we want to make it “the new Mediterranean Love.”<sup>7</sup>

Although Albania is blessed with a great tourism potential, the international public is not very familiar with this country as a tourist target. Its potential is not enough to attract tourists. It needs more professionals to promote and manage the entire tourism industry. Some of people who are involved in this industry do not have the proper qualification to work in any of the tourism areas. The Albanian tourism industry needs to undertake a rigorous transformation not only in the mentality of Albanians but also in the world’s eye.

In the *Albania Real Estate Market Report 2009*, it is reported that “the revenue from foreign visitors in 2007 and 2008 are US \$1 billion and US \$1.3 billion respectively” (pg. 15). In “Albania's Changing Tourism Environment” (1992), Hall examines the distinctive historical-cultural evolution of Albania and how these elements will affect the tourism development process now. Before the 1990s, Albania experienced a harsh time, but it still presents a variety of natural and cultural attractions to which Hall refers as some of the greatest potential for tourism development anywhere in Europe. The author provides information about Albanian tourism from the King Zog regime (1928-1939) to 1990. He also discusses the anti-tourist environment that had been present in Albania from 1920 to 1990. An example of this is the requirements put by the Communist government that the tourists were supposed to meet if they wanted to enter in Albania, such as (p. 38):

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<sup>7</sup> The slogan used for the spots advertised on CNN in April 2008.

- To apply for a visa two months prior to the visit in Albania;
- Contact with local population should be minimal;
- The itinerary had to be made by the official guide;
- Religious documents were confiscated;
- Tourists should conform to particular sartorial requirements and hair styles.

These kinds of restrictions help explain the low statistics presented by Hall in his several publications. For example in 1989, only 14,435 tourists were admitted to enter the country (pg. 40).

Hall (1992) still believes that “Albania could present itself as a model for sustainable tourism within a Mediterranean environment” (pg. 41). In “Rural Diversification in Albania” (1999) he evaluates the post-Communist context and focuses on the possibility of considering rural tourism as a vehicle for Albanian development because of the wealth of natural and cultural heritage. Based on the experiences of Italy, Croatia, and Greece, the new non-Communist Albanian governments have considered tourism as an essential tool toward development, yet Hall argues that due to the post-war Communist collectivization, rural tourism in Albania will be difficult. During the 1980s, the cultivated land increased by 240% but the population growth was even greater. The centralized rural economy was not helping the rural community escape poverty. As a result of its isolation, at the end of the 1980s Albania was unique in Europe in that two-thirds of the country’s total population was living in rural areas and the rural population was still growing rapidly (pg. 284).

Beginning in 1991 a series of reforms tended to help Albanian agriculture by introducing privatization. The rural population was not mentally prepared for this transformation and lacked managerial skills. Due to this, the results were harsh, not only for the rural community but for the whole country. Within three years of the removal of Communism the country's 8.3 million fruit trees had been reduced to 3.2 million. On the other hand, Hall argues that with the collapse of industries, agriculture accounted for more than the half of Gross Domestic Product (pg. 283). However, he is still positive that rural tourism has a significant development potential and can be considered as an engine for rural development in particular. Some of the services that rural tourism can offer are organic farming, quality wine production, and fishing. Hall suggests that local products be used as much as possible; that visitors be accommodated in locally owned and managed lodges; that the local manufacturers be engaged to produce more crafts goods and other products; and that the service sector remain in local ownership (pg. 285). He notes, however, that the removal of Communism has brought emigration and rural-to-urban migration, and the results have been a loss and diminution of traditional rural skills.

Hall continues to explore Communism's influence on tourism in his other paper, "Tourism as Sustainable Development? Albania's Experience of Transition" (1999). He analyzes post-Communist reconstruction and rural tourist development as a way out of instability. Hall argues that rural tourism is an essential vehicle for cultural expression and employment. Political and economical instability have been an obstacle for tourists and investors as well. Despite these problematic issues, Hall claims that tourist activity has increased dramatically. Looking back, Hall describes Albania as the "Soviet Union's playground" during the 1950s. All the tourist resorts were built based on the "Soviet

classic” design and any chance for international tourism development was minimal (p. 34). After the collapse of Communism, Albanians oriented their anger and violence toward all forms of state property. At the same time, Communism’s fall gave them the opportunity to emigrate. Hall sees emigration as a relief for the economy because emigrant remittances constitute a third of Albanian GDP. Many émigrés’ incomes, however, are earned from tourism-related employment in Greece and Italy, and bearing in mind the current financial situation in the above mentioned countries, the question that comes to mind is whether Albanians will still be able to earn enough income so that they can send money home.

Further, Hall continues to analyze the post-Communist situation in Albania. He recalls the “pyramid investment scheme,” which collapsed during the first months of 1997 and produced domestic chaos. He refers to the underground economy of drugs, gun running, and kidnapping girls or women for prostitution, as the only “successful businesses” at that time. Today, the country has gone through a series of reforms to leave behind the unrest of 1997. However, the image of Albania is still associated with the troublesome state of 1997. As Hall points out, this country possesses many tourism resources and wide-ranging activities. It has made great progress in offering security and order so it can advertise properly and in the right markets so that the international community will realize that Albania today is a chaos-free place. Still, there is a long way to go before it reaches the European standards for tourism. Hall uses the example of the country’s overall communication system, which at sixteen telephone lines per one thousand people is the lowest in Europe. As a solution to develop tourism he proposes once again rural tourism and the services that it offers, such as carpentry, silversmithing,



textile production, and pottery production. Hall is confident that 200,000 people could be employed in this way.

An important role in easing this transition period has been played by foreign organizations with their development projects. According to Hall they are motivated by a wish to cut the danger of villages being shadowed by large-scale coastal tourism. An example of non-governmental organizations that help the tourism development is presented in “Consensus and Conflict: The Socioeconomic Challenge Facing Sustainable Tourism Development in Southern Albania” (2000) by Holland. She analyzes consensus and conflict within the community involved in tourism, exploring the problems that have arisen, and concludes that sustainable tourism development in southern Albania or elsewhere in the Balkans may be an alternative economic development. “Sustainable tourism development” means “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs” (pg. 511). One of the problems that Holland refers to is long years of totalitarian oppression which still produce social tension and conflict. On the other hand, countries in transition, like Albania, “suffer from low human resources, inadequate governance, weak institutions and immature democratic structures at the national and local level” (p. 513).

By examining the experience of rural development in the communes of Himara and Saranda in southern Albania (1995-1998), assisted by the European Union programs of Link Inter-European Non-governmental Organization (EU-LIEN) and Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies (PHARE)<sup>8</sup>, Holland discusses the

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<sup>8</sup>PHARE is one of the three pre-accession programs financed by the European Union to assist the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union.

difficult social relations within the local community in the rural areas. The main aim of EU-LIEN and PHARE was to enable the local population to take part in the decision-making process. The way to achieve this was by creating a framework for business, local government, and community organizations to analyze tourism issues within the village and region. The project not only planned a list of activities to develop tourism but also an implementation strategy. Unfortunately, all this was happening at a bad time. During 1997 the country's "pyramid" investment schemes collapsed and Albania plunged into chaos. Such events will not be seen positively in the eyes of the international community and it will not provide any support, nor will Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) or donors release any financial support. If this happens the government cannot financially support any tourism development plan. Time has proven that the Albanian government is incapable of financially supporting, organizing, and promoting issues relating with tourism without international assistance.

The publication by the Albanian National Tourism Agency and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports (MTCYS), *Statistics on the Number of Visitors in Albania January-June 2009* (2009), presents information about tourist revenue for January-June 2009. It also provides information on the number of tourists that entered Albania during that period, and their origins. The total number of tourists in 2009 was 951,495 persons, 522,197 of them international tourists and 429,298 Albanians. Seventy-one percent of visitors who came to Albania came by land, 19% by air, and 10% by sea; 82 % came for vacation, 5% for business, and 10% for other unspecified reasons. The total of 522,197 is 10% more than in 2008. These statistics, however, do not match the numbers given in the MTCYS report *Tourism Revenue 2008-2009*. Collecting

statistical data about Albania is not easy and in most cases the source or the method of gathering the data are not specified, making the information less reliable. Another difficulty that an international researcher can face with the official sources is the fact that they are not provided in English.

Another way to get the information is through the media. An article published on the official website of the private national television channel, Top Channel, claims that the number of tourist arrivals from January to August 2009 was around two million, 42.5% more than in 2008 (2009). This information was announced by GencPasko, a representative of MTCYS. It is difficult to identify the right statistics related to tourist arrivals when we have the same source that publishes different data. This shows the urgent need for data consistency otherwise it will be difficult to plan a future strategy.

Other important publications from governmental sources that are related to the current tourism situation and that provided statistical data are the documents that are published in the official site of Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports such as, “Tourism Resources in the Albanian Districts” (2009). This publication presents the rich culture heritage of Albania. It describes nine districts in Albania and their most important tourist resources, one hundred seven in total. This list includes the sites in Korça County with its seven tourist resources and their components. The list is published in the MTCYS official website and it is available only in Albanian (refer to Appendix II for the full list).

*Albania from the History* [sic] (2007) provides a more detailed history of Albania, aiming to provide information to tourists about the old archaeological and cultural heritage of the country, and the people's hospitality. It starts with Prehistory, 6000-3000

BCE, and ends with the present time. This modest book will not only serve an instructive purpose in the academic environment, but it will also provide useful information to tourists. Too little is known outside of Albania about the country's rich history. Through publications like this, tourists will be introduced to a country that has a lot to offer in the tourism industry.

In *Albania, Your's [sic] to Discover* by MTCYS, (2007), the Ministry in collaboration with National Tourism Organization provides a general thematic guide to Albania focusing on five areas: general information, traditional cuisine, museums, underwater heritage, and sport activities. The cuisine section presents the specialties of the northern, central, and southern regions. Due to the geographic location, between East and West, one can easily see the influence of oriental and occidental culinary arts in Albania. An important feature of the cuisine is the rich variety of vegetables and fruits that keep their natural features, color and flavor. The country also has a long tradition in the production of alcoholic drinks. The most traditional is "raki," a flavored brandy distilled from grapes, plums, blackberry, and other fruits. Viticulture also has a long tradition. In this section of the guide, Pogradec is presented as an area known for wine or "raki" production in each household. "Almost everybody makes wine according to recipes handed down from one generation to the other" (p.20). Due to this, one of the annual festivals is Wine Day in Pogradec.

The pocket guide continues with the description of twenty-two museums in fourteen major cities, but it is far from complete. In the city of Korça it mentions just three museums, out of the five that may be found there.

The section on underwater heritage is mostly focused on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea. The last part of this section mentions slightly the lakes, among which are Prespa and Ohrid Lakes. Both of them are in Korça County and are known for their archeological artifacts and underwater reefs. Their fauna and flora also have great tourism values, such as the National Park of Prespa.

The last part of the pocket guide presents culture and sports activities planned for 2007 throughout Albania.

*Tourism Industry Strategy for 2007-2013* (MYCTS, 2008) is a report that examines the situation in tourism during 2005-2006 and lists the most problematic issues that restrain tourism development, such as (p. 3):

- Lack of political will for concrete action;
- Lack of federal and local institutions that monitor and guarantee the implementation of any tourism development plan;
- The fact that urban plans are not based on clear and effective economic, sociocultural, and environmental analyses;
- Lack of an international standardized system to gather tourism statistical data;
- A poor infrastructure system;
- Lack of sufficient accommodations to support the target number;
- Lack of a dependable land legalization and ownership law;
- Lack of highly qualified human resources in the tourism industry;

- Insufficient investments to protect and conserve the natural and cultural sites;
- Low quality of telecommunication and Internet services.

Regardless the above obstacles, the Ministry of Interior Affairs has recorded about 1.1 million tourists during 2007, with 73,402 in June alone.

Through examination of the current situation the authors come up with a strategy on how to improve tourism in the future years 2007-2013. First they identify the main tourism types (pg. 9):

- Cultural Tourism, which includes focus on galleries, studios, performing and visual arts, festivals, celebrations, rituals, events, and buildings;
- Rural Tourism, which engages tourists in rural activities and environments;
- Natural Tourism (Adventure and Ecotourism); which includes outdoor activities such as sightseeing, scenic driving, beach experiences, wildlife viewing, hiking, mountain biking, camping, horseback riding, river and lake canoeing and fishing, caving, scuba diving, trekking, water rafting, kayaking, rock and mountain climbing, cross-country skiing, safaris, surfing, windsurfing, ballooning and sea sailing (Tourism New, n. d.), aiming at conservation and nature appreciation;
- Curative Tourism, which is a therapeutic type of tourism that offers treatment for ailments by using natural factors such as hot and mineral springs, mud and herbal baths;

- Sun and Sea or Lake Tourism, which consists of all the activities in water and sunbathing;
- Business, Congress, Expo Tourism, and Conferences, which encourage exhibitions, traveling, corporate hospitality, and outdoor activities.

Due to the above variety this strategy aims to bring a great diversity of tourism products, to create new opportunities for the local subjects affiliated with tourism to express themselves, and to give better chances to the provinces and rural communities to contribute in the tourism development strategy. More precisely, for 2013 they aim for sustainable ecological, sociocultural, and economic development, partnerships, and quality. The steps that they will follow to meet these will be through:

- Community awareness and marketing;
- More investments;
- Better qualified human resources;
- A developed infrastructure system;
- Evaluation of the tourist feedback;
- Gathering data and managing an effective information system.

The Ministry would be well advised to add the need for a “Capacity Study” so that they will not only be ready to provide better service but also to protect the environment without abusing its capacity. Considering tourism only as an economic generator may lead to more disadvantages than advantages for the society. While planning a strategy we should, for instance, protect the vegetation from road widening and car pollution. As

*Environmental Research in Albania* (Pambuku&Proku, 2009) shows “the level of expenditure and their efficiency on environmental protection and prevention of environmental degradation – both by the public and the private sector – is extremely low, and efficiency poor” (pg. 7). Even though Albanian laws on environmental protection are in accordance with European standards, they are not well enforced or implemented (pg. 7).

Based on the report *Tourists Revenue 2008-2009* by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport (2009), Albania had about one million tourists from January to June 2009, 10% more tourists than in 2008. The Ministry predicts that the number of international tourists will increase, and with it the contributions of tourism in the Albanian economy. However, the fact that the authors do not specify the source of their information makes the data not very useful. In 2008 Albania’s revenue from tourism reached €1.2 billion, a growth of twenty 20% compared to the previous year according to data from Albania’s Central Bank, cited by the MTCYS website. The statistics for 2009 have been not made public yet, but the MTCYS claims that the revenue has increased.

According to the Albania Business and Investment Agency’s paper *Albanian Tourism Today* (2009), Albania is a new opportunity for investors. The tourism industry is open to any interested individual or company to invest capital in enterprises that will affect positively the economy of the country. According to the authors, investors should invest in Albania for the following reasons:



- Albania is characterized by a favorable geographical position. It has a great variety of natural resources, and untouched natural beauty. It also has excellent climate conditions for year-round tourism activity.
- Labor cost is relatively low.
- Albania has a rich cultural and historical heritage.

Due to this, Albania offers a large number of specific sectors where an investor can expect a good profit. The intact Mediterranean coastline, from Velipoja in the north, to Xara in the south, through its long sandy beaches and clean water, can easily become an investment hotspot. Interior areas are famous for lakes and spectacular mountain scenery (though it should be emphasized that mountain areas require considerable investments in infrastructure to ease meeting the tourists' needs).

Investors are sorely needed since, as already documented, there are many deficiencies that inhibit tourism development. The Albania National Tourism Agency delivered a survey to private and public institutions that deal with tourism to identify the problems that restrict tourism development (2009). Based on the results of the survey, tourism in Albania deals with the following problems:

- Poor quality of infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and water, which has always been an issue in Albania;
- Lack of a clear and consistent land legalization law;
- Inadequacy of institutions of public order, such as medical service, fire protection, and public safety;

- Poor service quality, which leads to a considerable number of complaints due to the lack of trained professional people;
- High prices that are not harmonized with the service quality, so tourists who visit Albania do not come back again and they spread bad publicity to their communities;
- Poor Internet service, which limits marketing (so, in the meanwhile in Albania the news is still spread by word of mouth);
- Lack of seaports, despite the fact that Albania has a 450 kilometers of coastline, and airports, there being just one international airport, Mother Theresa, near the capital, Tirana.

Many of these issues are common problems in less developed countries, but the legacy of the communist regime contributes the problem of disputes over land ownership. Land ownership and legalization have become a real issue and as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has reported, “disputes over property ownership in the coastal region have caused social strife and blocked initiatives to develop the region's tourist potential.” (Organization for Security, n.d.). The Agency for Legalization, Urbanization and Integration of the Areas/Informal Buildings in the Republic of Albania, which is referred as ALUIZNI, blames the past Communist regime for the problems that have accompanied the processes and management of the land in Albania. During that time that the owners were dispossessed of their property and the people had no right of ownership (Agency for Legalization, n.d.). At the time of the transition to democracy, village land commissions were created that had to distribute

collective farm land among the villagers in proportion to the family size. In this way the property did not go to the former owners. Yet, only after 1995, did the people gain the right of ownership and the right to sell the property allocated by the commission. This has been causing registration problems and increased insecurity among the potential investors.

The case of Club Méditerranée is an interesting study of the problem with development that continues to exist in Albania. Through Club Méditerranée (Club Med), Albania had a chance to become a major tourism destination, but the government was not able to manage the situation with professionalism. As a result, they probably lost one of the biggest potential investors. Club Med was the ninth-largest hotel company in the world in 1986 (Hart, 1990). It started its journey in 1950 as a nonprofit sport association and by 2008 the resort company operated 80 villages in Europe, Africa, the United States, the Caribbean, Brazil, Southern Asia, French Polynesia, and Australia. Due to increasing competition, in 1983 Club Med elaborated a strategy to increase the loyalty of its customers. The strategy included “educating the travel agents about the Club Med vacation package”; binding in Club Med’s promotional efforts exclusively with “expert” agencies; rotating a “flying team” of GO’s<sup>9</sup> who would hold informational seminars in North American cities; and creating travel-agent schools and placing the graduates with “expert agencies” (pg. 3).

In 2003 Club Med started to consider the opportunity to build a sea resort with their brand in Kakome, which is located on the southern Albanian coast, on the Ionian Sea. Club Med specialists chose the Bay of Kakome for many reasons. It is located near the

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<sup>9</sup> GO's are members of the staff (*gentils organisateurs*, "gracious organizers").

Albanian city of Saranda, and is across from Corfu Island. It is characterized by extraordinary beauty, with virgin nature, and limpid blue seawater (Koleka, 2005). Dritan Celaj, chief of the Albanian construction company Riviera, has stated that, “Kakome Village was going to be one of the most beautiful in the world. It was going to put Albania on the tourism map as an important location” (Koleka, 2005). As Koleka points out, tourism in Albania makes up just 8.5 percent of Albania’s Gross Domestic Product, much less than the neighboring countries. Through this project things probably were going to change for the better for the Albanian economy, turning the country into a destination of choice for international tourists. Through the help of international experts in the leisure real estate business Club Med made the final master plan of the project and calculated every minor detail so that the project could be successful. They chose Corfu’s airport for their clients’ departure and arrivals. The trip from Corfu to Kakome was supposed to be carried out by a ship or fast boat to give this vacation a sense of adventure. Another reason they chose this route was to avoid bringing visitors in from the airport in Tirana, a six-hour journey over poor Albanian roads.

Club Med’s villages have created jobs and tourism revenue to economically depressed countries. This could have been the case for Kakome as well. This project had the full support of Prime Minister Fatos Nano, but this was not enough for Club Med to succeed in this project. It faced opposition from local villagers in regard to the property rights, claiming that they owned the location. This inconvenient issue slowed the process of developing the project. The continuous protests made it impossible for Club Med to start construction four years after the government gave the green light reported (Koleka, 2009).

The development came to a halt in June 2009. ALSAT Television announced that, “the major project of tourism in Albania, the Club Med for Kakome, no longer exists. They gave up the project in the Albanian Ionian Coast after an exhausting conflict with the land owners” (Darsi, 2009). This decision was announced by Florence Le Gall, Club Med’s director of regional development. (In the local Saranda media it is still reported that the Kakome Bay Resort will go ahead with the original developer; it is unclear whether that refers to Club Med or the Riviera Company.) After 46 years of isolation Albania needs Western experience to meet the international tourists’ need. Club Med had its own interest in investing in Kakome, but Albania was going to gain benefits from this project. The European Union (EU) has always urged Albania to solve the problem over land ownership to attract foreign investors and meet at the same time the requirements of the EU. This is not the first case where foreign investors have canceled their project due to land ownership issues. The government needs to work harder in solving such issues because all the money that they are spending in advertising Albania on CNN or other globally circulated media will not be effective otherwise.

In addition to all the internal problems that have been endlessly identified by government agencies and students of the Albanian society and economy, another challenge for Albania is control over information available to the international tourism audience. Misinformation about Albania abounds. The first source that the tourist will refer to before undertaking a trip will be Internet and travel guides. Through these sources they try to create a mental image of the destination and make a choice. Hudman and Jackson's book *Geography of Travel and Tourism* (2008), provides information that is not common in the travel brochures. It is a helpful book not only for travelers, but it

also has pedagogical value. It gives a general geographic description of the world and its most important geographic regions. Also, it explores specific regions and gives a detailed overview of their cultural and physical characteristics and shows the elements of the tourism industry in these different regions. The authors help travelers with information about the most significant attractions by emphasizing the originality of each region. In the chapter about Central Europe and the Balkan states the authors include Albania and provide the reader with a short description of it. Yet, even in this well-researched resource, the information about Albania is not quite accurate. For instance, they state that Albania is subject to destructive earthquakes and tsunamis. Actually, Albania was identified in the 13th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering as a geologically and seismotectonically a rather complicated region, but with a low-risk for major earthquakes. The authors of Probabilistic Seismic Hazard Maps for Albania claim that Albania is characterized by an “obvious high number of small earthquakes and rare large earthquakes.” (Aliaj, et al., 2004). In regard to tsunamis, this is quite an unfamiliar phenomenon in Albania. Another inaccuracy is when Hudman and Jackson state that the language in Albania is Albanian and Greek (p. 295). True, throughout the country there are Greeks, Macedonians, Vlachs and Roma minorities that are bilingual, but the only official language in Albania is Albanian. Hudman and Jackson also presents superficial tourism characteristics that will hardly motivate any visitors to come in Albania. As far as the Southeast region is concerned, which includes Korça, it is not mentioned at all. This is one of the books available on the market for those who are potentially interested in travel to Albania, and there is a considerable number of other published works which provide misleading or insufficient information. The main goal should be as much as

possible to circulate accurate and detailed tourist information about Albania. So far, the international travel guides have not done a good job of this. Generally, they provide broad information on Albania and focus briefly in some of its main cities.

Examination of this literature leads to some conclusions. The transition from Communism and the ensuing political instability is a strong element that shapes the emerging economy. It is obvious that Albania is still in its transition phase because the government has not yet developed a clear strategy. At least in part this is due to the lack of experience and to the difficulties inherited from the past. It is widely demonstrated in the literature that despite its great touristic potential, Albania has had a hard time succeeding because of generally unprepared and inexperienced managers in the private sector who lack knowledge about business.

## Why Korça County?

Archaeological evidence and historical documents shed light on the antiquity of Korça County. The archaeological findings in the Korça basin show that it has been inhabited since the Neolithic. The traces of this period are found in two areas: in the village of Podgorie and at the place where the Devoll and Dunavec rivers join. The last site has artifacts from the oldest period of the Neolithic and represents the oldest traces of the population of the Korça basin (6000-3000 BCE). The last traces of the Neolithic were discovered at the prehistoric site of Maliq. This marks the beginning of the Copper Age (3000-2100 B. C. E.). Also, this is clear evidence of the active and continuous life during the prehistoric times in the Korça County territory.

The register of Korça and the nearby commune of Përmet for the year 1431-1432, immediately after the Turkish invasion, chronicles that Korça County was included in a *vilayet* with its center in Korça, which the Turks called “Gjorixhe” (Qyteti im, 2008, pg.12). At that time Korça was a well-built and important economical center that had a favorable position, with a castle, a bazaar, and a strong economy. The city of Korça, which used to be called Peshkëpia, was founded in the 15th century. It was given to IljazMirahori as a reward for his participation in the conquering of Constantinople, and for also being married to the Sultan’s<sup>10</sup> daughter. Mirahori built a mosque in Korça around 1496 (IljazBeyMirahori Mosque), as well as Turkish baths, and quickly turned the city into a trading and artisan center (Qyteti im, 2008, pg. 12). This mosque is not only one of the oldest monuments in the city but also it is important for its historical, cultural, religious and architectural values (Sula, 2009, pg. 38).

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<sup>10</sup>Sultan Bayazit II (1447–1512)



In the second half of the 19th century Korça developed into one of the biggest economic, commercial, and cultural centers of the country. As the *Your Key to Korça* (Sula, 2009, pg. 39) reveals, the old bazaar is evidence of this flourishing period. Merchandise from Greece, Turkey, Trieste, and Venice was exchanged and more than 1,000 shops made this an important and economically active zone. Visitors can still admire its cultural and architectural values.

Today Korça is the main city in southeastern Albania and sits on an 869-meter-high plateau west of Florina, Greece, 30 km south of Lake Ohrid. The city is a gateway to Albania for anyone arriving from Greece via the Kapshtica border crossing 28 km east. Its regional population is about 360,191 inhabitants. The city of Korça is undergoing sustainable population growth, with a 2008 population of 86,179 inhabitants (Shapo, 2008). In addition to the Albanian majority, the county also has population of Vallachs, Slavs, Romanians, Romas, and Egyptians. The county has four districts, Devolli, Kolonja, Korça, and Pogradec. Korça County has six municipalities, (Bilishti, Erseka, Korça, Leskovik, Maliq, and Pogradec), thirty-one communes, and three hundred forty-five villages (Shapo, 2008). The Albanian Statistics Institute (n.d.) provides the following data on demographics for the Korça County:

Table 2  
*Population in Korça County by District, January 2008*

| Districts       | TOTAL   |        |        | URBAN  |        |        | RURAL  |        |        |
|-----------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | MF      | M      | F      | MF     | M      | F      | MF     | M      | F      |
| <b>Devoll</b>   | 33,850  | 15,818 | 18,032 | 8,199  | 3,672  | 4,527  | 25,651 | 12,146 | 13,505 |
| <b>Kolonje</b>  | 14,412  | 7,120  | 7,293  | 7,226  | 3,247  | 3,979  | 7,186  | 3,873  | 3,313  |
| <b>Korça</b>    | 140,659 | 69,884 | 70,775 | 62,914 | 27,702 | 35,211 | 77,746 | 42,182 | 35,564 |
| <b>Pogradec</b> | 71,969  | 36,495 | 35,473 | 27,858 | 12,760 | 15,098 | 44,110 | 23,736 | 20,375 |

*Note.* The data are retrieved from the Albanian Statistics Institute website (n. d.).

Korça County is blessed with a great touristic potential. Its attractions consist of distinguished features that will be a generator for the tourists and investors. Publishing these attractions in the target tourism markets will help the tourism development plan. Even though it has a territory (Alac, et al., n.d.) of just about 3697 sq km, it consists of a variety of tourism destinations with year-round tourism activity. According to *Tourism Strategy for 2007-2013* (MTCYS, pg. 12), these days tourists all over the world are showing interest in cultural tourism, adventure tourism, and ecotourism. Korça County has several opportunities for different type of tourism, such as culture, rural, natural, curative, sun and sea (lake), business, ecotourism, and adventure tourism. Through the Korça Event Calendar, which is an annual publication, the Korça Municipality provides year-round options to make the stay more active by engaging the visitors in various activities and focused on interesting recreations. Through the *Events Calendar 2009* (Korça Municipality, 2009) one realizes that there are good reasons why the Korça District is classified as the “district of celebration.” The importance of these activities to Korça can be gauged by the fact that just the main annual activities for 2008 required about \$172,327,30. Appendix II contains a full list of annual activities. Tourists can find updated information in the three largest cities (Erseka, Korça and Pogradec) municipalities. However, the Municipality of Korça just recently published the Events Calendar 2010. From the planning point of view at this point they should have published the Events Calendar for 2011 so that the visitors could view their options for the next year. It is summer time and tourists have already made plans for the holidays so that few of them might consider useful the Events Calendar 2010 at this point.

Ecotourism has great possibilities in a county like Korça. This county has a continental-Mediterranean climate, which is dry and healthy, with a cold winter and warm dry summer. There are three major lakes, Macro Prespa, Micro Prespa, and Ohrid, and three-fourths of the county territory is occupied by mountains and hills (Alac, et al., n.d.). This diversity offers a variety of choices, like boat trailing, climbing, camping, cultural activities, skiing, swimming, hiking, and hunting. In the Macro Prespa area is the Prespa National Park, which not only offers the tranquility of the lake but also beautiful mountains and woods with a unique fauna and flora. One of the rare species found there is the Dalmatian pelican (*Pelicanus crispus*) (Sula, 2009, pg. 30).

An important natural monument located in the Lake Macro Prespa is Liqenas. It is the place where the Macedonian, Albanian and Greek national borders meet. It is Macro Prespa Lake that connects these three nations, on the shores of which are evidence of prehistoric life. A series of villages are situated along the shores of the Prespa Lakes and work is in progress to promote the development of rural tourism in these areas. Major activities could include boat trips, sunbathing in summer, bird observation, and fishing. The restaurants near the lake offer tasty fresh fish, including the well-known bleak, a small fish similar in appearance but not in taste to sardines. Liqenas' inhabitants hang bleak on hooks affixed to the ceiling, and let them dry over the smoke of a specific herb. West of Liqenas it is located the small unpopulated island of Maligrad, which contains the ruins of a 14th century basilica (Sula, 2009, pg. 30).

Experience has taught us that visitors will greatly appreciate destinations where the community takes pride in its tourism and is involved in its activities. Due to this, Korça municipality organizes a number of projects that promote the local products and

encourage the community to be part of the tourism industry. Such activities are the Pie Fest, the Beer Fest, the End of the Year Fair, and others. However, in Korça County, many tourism sites are located in rural areas. The communities in these areas are very difficult to deal with when it comes to changing the old ways of thinking, acting, and working because the Communist theories have taken root in their life style. Rarely are they willing to respect new ideas, views, and believe, and most of the times they are characterized by preconceived opinions regarding the tourists way of dressing and acting.

Voskopoja is one of the most famous villages and it is included in almost all the tourism tours and national guides. It is at a distance of about 21 km from Korça, in the mountains of southeastern Albania, at an altitude of 1160 meters above sea level. Voskopoja started to develop into a town as early as the 17th century, and flourished in the 18th century. There used to be twenty-two churches, but vandalism, two world wars, and an earthquake during the 1960s have reduced that to five churches and one monastery (Sula, 2009, pg. 89). Places to be seen are the Academy Hotel, Saint Nicholas Church, Saint Mary Church, Saint Thomas Church, Church of Prophet Ilias, Trinity Church and Saint John the Baptist Monastery. Apart from visits in the old churches, you can hire horses from local farms and trek around the beautiful countryside. In the *Constitution of the Republic of Albania*, decision number 558, approved on January 8, 2003, declares Voskopoja, as a historical center protected by the government. Due to this, the government considers it as an area with priorities on tourism development and conservation and protection projects (2003). As such, the Voskopoja Commune undertook a reconstruction project of the Korça-Voskopoja main road. This will make the village more accessible.

Boboshtica is a very attractive village that once was large and flourishing. It is just seven kilometers from Korça, to the southeast. For Korça's inhabitants it is considered a weekend destination to escape the routine and stress of the week. Boboshtica is famous for its mulberry trees. The local people produce the well-known yellow to green mulberry *raki*. Boboshtica's women are also known for their traditional carpets made on looms (Sula, 2005, pg. 83). The traditional food specialties are delightful, like the traditional regional specialties of *lakror* [pie], grilled or roasted lamb and veal, country salad with fresh vegetables, and *bakllava*. A very important celebration that brings visitors in Boboshtica is Saint Mary Day on August 15th. Some tourist sites are the Nicholas Monastery, and the churches of Saint John and Saint Demetrius.

Dardha is located 20 km southeast of Korça, at an altitude of over 1300 m. It is well known for the characteristic architecture of the houses, which are built with stones. Its inhabitants are known to be hospitable, generous, and, unlike many other places, they have a close connection to folklore and tradition. There is a good chance that tourists could see Dardha's inhabitants wearing the traditional regional dress. Also, Dardha is a good place for those who love hiking and skiing. Unlike Boboshtica, Dardha is famous for plum *raki*.

Rehova is located east the city of Erseka, and can be reached by a five-minute drive or just a twenty-minute walk along the stone-paved road. It is one of the villages that represent the best of the region of Kolonja. Like the other villages mentioned above, Rehova has old stone houses. The residents of this village still live in a traditional lifestyle. They produce milk, eggs, and meat by themselves. A walk through the village

of Rehova can bring you to a trout farm in the base of Mount Gramozi, “a challenging but rewarding hike to Albania’s third highest mountain” (Erseka Municipality, 2010).

Apart from the natural monument sites, Korça County offers a variety of museums. There are eight museums, five of them located within the city of Korça.

1. The National Medieval Art Museum.

Its rich archive includes historical, cultural, and artistic exhibits from the medieval period. As many as 6500 icons are registered, with only 200 of them exhibited. This museum not only exhibits art work, but also promotes, protects, conserves, and restores them. During 2008 the Korça Mayor announced that the municipality has started to build a new museum complex to replace the National Medieval Art Museum, financed by the Greek Consulate with about €480,000, but so far there is no evidence of progress on the project (Qyteti im, 2008, pg. 11).

2. The First Albanian School, Education Museum.

The museum is housed in the building where the first Albanian school opened on March of 1887. The museum displays the first and second Albanian reading primer. Also, there are pictures of the people who contributed to the opening of the school, which was not an easy aim to achieve.

3. The Archaeological Museum.

This museum is housed in two 19th century dwellings that are acknowledged monuments of culture. It focuses on the pre-history and history of the district, starting from the Neolithic and going up to the Medieval period. The museum has about 1,200 artifacts.

4. The Bratko Oriental Art Museum.

The works housed in this museum, around 430, include Chinese altars, Japanese women's clothes, Chinese accessories, Indonesian swords, European medals, Japanese paintings, and many photos. George Dhimitër Boria (1903-1990) was an esteemed world class Albanian-American photographer, artist, collector of Asian arts, and friend of many international notables such as General Douglas MacArthur. He collected these antiquities and hoped that one day the public was going to appreciate them in a museum. Although it was only opened in June 2003 it has quickly gained great popularity.

#### 5. Vangjush Mio's Museum House

This was the house of the impressionist painter from Korça, Vangjush Mio. There are 40 oil paintings, including landscapes painted in a particular colorful style. Mio was the first Albanian painter to open an exhibition in Tirana in 1920, and later in Bari, Italy. He was an outstanding painter.

#### 6. The Kamenica Tumulus.

This is the only open-air museum in Albania, and it is the biggest tumulus in the Balkans. This artificial Illyrian grave dates from the 13th century to the 6th century BCE. At this site tourists have a chance to experience the antiquity of the region, while students will be offered the opportunity to join the archaeological training school. The main purpose of it is to transmit values by which the new generation will more appreciate the cultural heritage.

#### 7. The Erseka Ethnographic Museum.

It is located in the center of the town and “possesses a wide collection of artifacts and documents related to the history of the area, dating back to the Neolithic period. It is a modest museum that displays the history of the region of Kolonja” (Explore, n. d.).

#### 8. The Pogradec Museum

Pogradec has a rich museum with evidence about antiquity and about the National Liberation Movement during World War II.

Among a variety of cultural and historical sites that the tourists find interesting are the churches, mosques, museums, and archaeological sites situated all over the county. The *Constitution of the Republic of Albania* lists the cultural monuments in the Albanian Republic (2003). There are approximately 116 cultural monuments in total in Korça County (Kolonja 16, Korça and Devoll 80, Pogradec 20), but not all of them are accessible to visitors. The main problem has to do with the lack of proper infrastructure.

A useful reference guide is *Your Key to Korça [Çelësi Turistik]* (Sula, 2005). It is a light book to carry and it is published in Albanian and English. It includes useful information about Korça city history, weather, its location, and demographic and economic data. An important section is reserved to the tourist sites and suggested tours. The tourist can find practical information about hotels, restaurants, bars, and different events taking part in the city throughout the year. In addition to the City of Korça, it includes other sites such as Boboshticë, Vithkuq, Voskopoja, Dardha, Devolli, and Mborja. The information is accurate and entertaining. The publication includes high quality pictures that help to visualize what is offered to the tourist. The only thing left to be improved is the map, which is impossible to read. The street names are printed in very small letters and any tourist would have difficulties moving around the city with it.



Apart from the sites already mentioned, the main cities of the county offer to the tourists the following services and amenities;

Table 3  
*Tourism Services in Korça County*

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Food/Drinks</b>                | Fast Food                                     |
|                                   | Bar ( 25)                                     |
|                                   | Traditional Food restaurants and Pizzeria(13) |
| <b>Tourists services</b>          | Bed and Breakfast                             |
|                                   | Banks / ATM                                   |
|                                   | Bookstore                                     |
|                                   | Casino  |
|                                   | Cinema (1)                                    |
|                                   | City Center                                   |
|                                   | Fitness Center (2)                            |
|                                   | Go-carts(1)                                   |
|                                   | Hotels (16)                                   |
|                                   | Internet Cafes                                |
|                                   | Library(3)                                    |
|                                   | Museums and Culture Monuments                 |
|                                   | Night Clubs                                   |
|                                   | Parks   |
|                                   | Shopping Centers(2)                           |
|                                   | Ski Resort                                    |
|                                   | Supermarkets and Local Farm Bazaar            |
|                                   | Theater(1)                                    |
| Tourists Agency(13)               |   |
| <b>Traditional Art and Crafts</b> | Craft Work                                    |
|                                   | Embroidery                                    |
|                                   | Pottery                                       |
|                                   | Woolen Works                                  |
| <b>Emergency</b>                  | Drugstore                                     |
|                                   | Fire Brigade (1)                              |
|                                   | Hospital (1)                                  |
|                                   | Police (1)                                    |

## **A Plan for Tourism Development in Korça County**

There is so much to say about Korça County. It attracts tourists with its charm, sweetness, dynamism, and simplicity. It is known as the “cradle of culture and education” and has an endless array of festivities, such as serenades, carnivals and masked balls, and beer fests. Those interested in nature, forests, mountains, lakes, and historic sites, should make sure to visit this County and have a fabulous experience. Regardless of its rich potential and numerous attractions, Korça County is not yet ready to develop a sustainable tourism industry unless it focuses on offering something unique that will distinguish it from other national and international destinations. To realize this we need first to identify any possible obstacle and later give solutions to improve the current situation. One important piece of literature is the recently developed *Action Plan for Tourism in Korça County* (2008), by the municipality of Korça. It presents a realistic picture of the tourism potential in Korça. It also identifies the main partners in assisting the tourism development. In some respect, this plan is the basis of my future work, because it helps inform my strategy for Korça County and helps me understand the problems in the County. Very useful information is presented at the end of the action Plan, where the authors have listed a variety of resources, including published works, travel guides, and websites. The authors of the draft examine six international publications and just three of them briefly mention Korça County and dedicate to it no more than two pages. In the 36 guides that are examined, Korça County is poorly introduced, with very general and sometimes inaccurate information. Only five of them,

which are GTZ<sup>11</sup> publications, focus specifically on the regions of the county, such as Korça, Dardha, Voskopoja, Liqenas, and Vithkuqi (pg. A-6). Of the 19 tourism agencies' website, only 16 mention the County and include Korça in one of their tours.

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<sup>11</sup> The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) is a federally owned organization (Gesellschaft, 2009).

### Problems inhibiting development

However, to fully understand Korça County's potential and needs, it has been necessary to refer to a much wider body of literature, which has served as a reflection on the tourism field and has helped to identify the following issues that restrain tourism development and some of the suggestions on how to overcome this transitional stage. I have already discussed a number of these issues, which have been identified by other commentators for the nation of Albania as a whole. Among these are:

- Problems with land ownership. There is a need for the establishment and enforcement of a land legalization law, the lack of which is driving away foreign investors. Land use planning also falls short of accepted standards. Landowners often do not consult with the Territorial Planning Office in their respective region and, therefore, frequently negatively affect the planning of the city or village when they undertake construction.

- Problems with data. There is a lack of an international standardized system to gather tourism statistical data on both the national and local level. Data are acquired and assembled haphazardly, which undermines their credibility and makes planning more difficult.

- Problems with infrastructure. The quality of roads, electric service, and water availability has always been an issue in Albania. The lack of airports and seaports is another issue that requires immediate attention.

- The fact that, although service quality is low, prices still stay high. Since prices are not harmonized with the service quality, tourists who visit Albania do not come back

again and they spread bad publicity to their communities. Service quality is poor due to the lack of highly qualified human resources in the tourism industry and insufficient facilities to support the target number of tourists.

- Lack of sufficient investment to protect and conserve the natural environments and culture sites. This leaves these resources vulnerable to degradation, undermining the potential for sustained tourism.

- Institutions of public services, such as medical service, fire protection, and public safety are insufficient.

- In many countries the Internet is the main source to publish and advertise the tourism industry while in Albania there is low quality of telecommunication and Internet services. Meanwhile, the news in Albania is still spread orally. This means that the marketing sector cannot function properly.

In addition to these that have been identified repeatedly in the literature, based on my own experiences in Albania I have identified two more that are essential to acknowledge in order understanding the true dimensions of the problems with tourism development in Albania and in Korça County. In many ways these two lie at the heart of all of the other problems.

- Lack of political will on the part of the government. Many of the problems just identified could be solved through government action; in fact most cannot be solved without government action. Yet in Albania there has historically, particularly since the demise of the Communist regime, been great difficulty creating and sustaining the commitment for concrete actions on the part of the federal and local governmental

institutions that monitor and guarantee the implementation of any tourism development plan. Lack of follow-through and consistency is evident in many different areas, like the implementation of the land-legalization procedures, or the development and maintenance of infrastructure. Government action tends to be too heavily tied to the political fortunes of particular politicians or parties, and as a consequence, government actions tend to proceed with fits and starts.

- “*S’ka Problem* [No Problem].”<sup>12</sup> This is a sort of attitude that characterizes Albanians in general. It is a phenomenon that has not only affected tourism development, but the economy of Albania in all its aspects. Every successful strategy requires professionalism, commitment, and reliable partners. When an opportunity is presented to Albanian institutions and individuals, they typically show initial interest in it and are highly enthusiastic about the collaboration. They make clear to the partner(s) that there will be “no problem [s’ka problem]” in meeting each other’s needs and successfully finalizing the project. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases there will indeed be problems preventing the project from running smoothly and in the worst-case scenario drive away the investors, since the Albanians do not follow through with their commitments, or have not resolved the impediments that they assured their interlocutors would be “no problem.”

There are several explanations for the “*S’ka Problem*” attitude, such as lack of professionalism, commitment, and reliability as partners in business. The Albanian government, by neglecting to battle corruption forcefully and consistently, has aggravated the “*S’ka Problem*” attitude and makes it hard for any foreign partner to continue the

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<sup>12</sup>“S’ka Problem” is an example of a general Mediterranean characteristic/problem

collaboration. An example of the “*S’ka Problem*” is the response I got from my interviewees and questionnaire respondents. When the subjects were introduced to the project they made it clear there was going to be “no problem” with collaboration. When the time came to conduct the interviews or complete the questionnaires, none of them fulfilled their previous commitment, or in the case of the questionnaire, only two.

### Confirmation from the survey responses

The two survey responses that were completed in this study offer confirmation of some of the problems I have identified. Both participants' answers give the impression of disappointment about what has been done so far in the tourism industry. According to them, the business investments in the Korça County tourism industry are poor. The tourism services quality is failing due to poor management and lack of understanding of the needs of tourists. Both respondents consider the social infrastructure (for instance, trained professional people), physical infrastructure (such as roads and hotels), and management as priorities that require investments. One respondent thought that the level of prices, of community cooperation with the tourism industry, and of the quality of services as indicative of the need for investment. They both stressed the importance of improving the cultural heritage and tourism legislation. (It is an issue often discussed in the Albania Parliament. The last time the vice minister of MTCYS brought up this topic in the parliament was May 2010 and yet the issue is not finalized.)

With regard to the question of how Korça County's tourism packages are promoted, both answered "poorly." They consider electronic media as the best way to convey information to the audience, and in particular television. Although they consider tourism service prices as being reasonable, the prices are nonetheless not harmonized with the quality of services. They both agree that professionalism is lacking in the tourism industry.

The last three questions were descriptive/essay questions. When asked, "What do you think local government can do to improve tourism in the county?" one answered that "the



local government will need to change its mentality.” The other said that, “the local government needed to elaborate more realistic and applicable tourism development strategies by considering the natural and historical resources of the county. Also, they should provide better training programs and support initiatives which aim the tourism development based on contemporary standards.”

When asked, “What you would change in regard to business investments in tourism?” one answered, “the concept,” the other said that, “businesses should respect more the traditions and customs and offer products which justify the price.”

In their additional comments they emphasized the importance of investments and better planning. Although tourism is an important element in economic development, it is not treated that way by the local government. The Korça Municipality is mainly focused in organizing a handful of activities so that Korça will be known as the City of Celebrations. Yet, this is not enough. The social and physical infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. There are not enough hotels, and as a result the prices are high. Due to this, only a certain group of people can afford to visit it.

### What needs to be done?

The following are some of the important steps that need to take place in the near future if we are aiming for the development of tourism industry and to overcome the present impediments.

- Overcoming the negative opinion that Albania has in the international community's eye. While going through the traveling books in the New Hartford Barnes and Nobel bookstore I discovered that Albania is poorly promoted in the tourism guiding books. Also, the information that can be "googled" is sometimes inaccurate and insufficient. Interested travelers have difficulties getting the proper information about Albania and this drives many of them away. An example of this is the movie *Taken*, produced in the 2008. It is about an Albanian gang of human traffickers who kidnap girls into sexual slavery. Due to this, many consider Albania as a dangerous place to travel to. In reality, they are ignoring the fact that Albania is a beautiful and friendly place. To provide the tourism world with an accurate image of Albania the institutions involved in the tourism industry should work more on promoting the country's real qualities. We still lack basic things such as an official website for Korça County tourism to directly deliver comprehensive travel information. International tourists are increasingly using travel websites, making the travel products globally accessible at a lower cost. There is a scarcity of information in the guidebooks and a poor representation of the county in the international tourism fairs.

- Boosting horizontal and vertical cooperation among government levels. By vertical cooperation I mean interaction between the federal and local institutions in decision making about tourism. Their relationship should be characterized by flexibility,

transparency, accountability, and rigorous participation. Through this collaboration we will move gradually from regional to interregional tourism. This collaboration might happen faster if the local government prepares a strategy with annual investment priorities and segment the targets and requirements. This will not only provide transparency in the eyes of the investors and taxpayers but also will be a sign of a clear vision for economic development. Both national and local government should work on eliminating bureaucratic barriers; this will not only boost the tourism investments but will also make its development feasible.

Horizontal cooperation is important as well. Government institutions, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth, and Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Work, Social Issues and Equal Chances, should cooperate and share rights and responsibilities with each other. Horizontal cooperation also includes relationships among local entities, such as that between the municipalities and the County. In Korça County, the political divergence between these local entities has been affecting the outcome of economical development of the Korça, Kolonja, Porgadec, and Devoll districts. It is in the County's interest to set aside the political competition and focus in what will boost economical development.

- Undertaking a capacity study and adopting an international standardized system to gather tourism statistical data. This will help to analyze the tourism industry and its market. This statistical information will reflect different aspects of domestic and international tourism, such as numbers of travelers, numbers of overnight stays, purposes of travel, types of accommodation, and the economic value of expenditures. These studies will not only help to work out the big picture and determine the future model, but

they will also make it possible to use tourists' feedback to bring about continuous improvements. We should not forget that tourism statistics are relatively new in Albania. For this reason the MTCYS should ask for technical support from experienced agencies or even countries. Together with the MTCYS, the local institutions should create a tourism database. It will not only serve as a repository for all the information regarding tourism but also these data will be accessible to researchers and businesses. Researchers will evaluate the information and will offer advice, while the businesses will be informed of the possible investment areas. The MTCYS should allocate financial bonuses or ease somehow the fiscal responsibilities of those tourism operators and businesses that rigorously submit the required data for the database. Some general aspects that should be included in the surveys are personal characteristics of the tourists, purpose of the trip, feedback on the accommodation services and expenditures, and tourism products and activities.

- Developing a safe and adequate service and physical infrastructure. Something as simple as ensuring running water all day is a challenge. Compared with the rest of the country, Korça is the only city in Albania with all-day running water, giving it a significant advantage over the rest of the country. Yet, the same thing cannot be said for the other cities and villages in Korça County. Another important aspect of the service infrastructure is Internet and telecommunication. We live in the era of Internet and technology; therefore, we should be ready to provide tourists with the facilities they use in their everyday life. Public transportation is also an important feature in the tourism industry. All the main cities of the County have decent public transportation, but the suburban and rural areas often provide only informal transportation. The main difficulties

that the tourists encounter are finding the station where they can pick up the bus, taxi, or minivan (*furgon*) to the suburban areas, and the ticket price which are not standardized. The Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports (MTCYS) in close cooperation with the local government, should work on providing a better transportation system.

The central government and the local ones are now doing a decent job improving the conditions of the main roads. Work to be done involves the installation of traffic lights and of welcoming signs at the tourist sites. The “highways” that exist in Korça County, however, are still below European Union (EU) standards. Considering that the County plays a strategic role, with its geographical position near the Greek and Macedonians frontiers, the government needs to increase the level of safety and accessibility. The construction of an airport will make the County a more easily accessible place as well as a stopping point for many travelers. This is not only a convenient solution for international tourists but it will prolong their staying as well.

- Preparing a highly qualified human resource department to provide good service.

One of the key ingredients in any tourism development plan is the people operating in the tourism industry. Right now Albania has an acute shortage of qualified staff in almost all the tourist services. To solve this problem, businesses should attract and keep talented managers and employees, motivate the workforce, and train them. Very important for building and sustaining labor quality will be frequent seminars that will keep workers updated with the new trends in the tourism market. These tourism seminars will also improve the skills, knowledge, and experience of the workforce. Relevant topics could be marketing, budgeting, and improving customer service. I suggest the use of surveys to measure customer satisfaction and at the same time rate the quality of products and

services, and human resource performance as well. The local government has to work with local businesses and the tourism operators. In the case of newly formed tourism businesses, local government should assist them in creating contacts and orienting them toward the right links.

Little is done currently in regard to people with disabilities. For this reason special tourism projects should be developed to help this population and involve it in different travel activities. This should not only apply to the tourists but also to the tourism staff.

I also suggest a certification system or test that will help select the best-qualified labor force. Quality of service is highly dependent on the level of education of the work force. The MTCYS should collaborate with the Ministry of Education and check the curriculum of any professional high school or state or private university specializing in tourism. The following table presents the number of students that graduated with a tourism degree in the state universities in Albania during 2008. The low number says something about the poor quality in the human resources involved in the tourism industry.

Table 4  
*Students Graduated in Albania in Tourism Major related 2008*

| <b>Shkodra University</b> |                   | <b>Korça University</b> | <b>Vlora University</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Tourism                   | Tourism Marketing | Tourism                 | Tourism                 |
| 0                         | 0                 | 0                       | 89                      |

*Note.* The data are retrieved from the Albanian Statistics Institute website (n. d.).

Yet the Civil Society Development Center (CSDC) Bulletin claims that during 2008 there were 147 students enrolled in Tourism and normally 20 of them graduate annually.

Although there is a contradiction between the two sources, the general picture is the same, low number of students that graduate with a tourism degree (CSDC, 2009).

- Improving the tourism product and its components, including transportation services, accommodations, and entertainment venues. When creating tourism products we should keep in mind the tourists' profile. (Refer to Appendix III). In addition there is a need to organize activities to exchange the services among individuals, groups, or institutions. In this way all the involved subjects can get to know each other's products. A good way to achieve high quality in the tourism products will be by increasing the competitiveness among the actors in the tourism market and diversifying tourism products and their types by extending the season throughout the year. "Innovation" should be the motto under which any tourism business has to operate. More concretely, Korça County should standardize the star classification system in accommodations, which in most cases now is misleading. There is also a need to produce a wide range of souvenirs and to reorganize the store locations, since they are distributed in a confusing manner even for the local people, and shops do not have settled business hours. Agricultural and craft items should be produced since they are important part of our local culture and heritage.

- Rehabilitation of damaged areas and introduction of measures to prevent further erosion and degradation of environmental resources. There need to be fiscal and other control measures to direct private investments towards environmentally conscious investments and to prevent environmental degradation by imposing fines on polluters. Simultaneously there need to be incentives for those companies and institutions that not only invest in tourism but also protect the environment. Solutions in regard

to environmental problems should start in the regions where tourism activity gets denser. The government needs to introduce laws that require conservation and the economical and ecological uses of the natural resources that avoid exceeding carrying capacities. Other action can be reduction in the use of energy and natural resources, consuming minimal fuel, and decreasing deforestation. Focus on environmental friendly and nature-oriented tourism, such as eco-tourism, will also help.

- Developing a marketing and promotion strategy with year-round promotional campaigns that will serve as an image creator and will be used in the local and international market. This strategy should be focused not only on the domestic arena but also on the international one. It is very important to raise awareness among the public and private sector, and non-governmental organizations as well. The more we extend the net of actors in this process the more results we are bound to get. For a feasible marketing and promotional strategy we should make use of the data gathered by the capacity study on possible markets, and their characteristics and expectations. Local institutions should not only cooperate with the government but also with the private sector and make an efficient use of new technologies to increase the chances of reaching the customers worldwide. We should be very careful to not just develop a mass promotion but a sustainable one as well. As part of the promotional activities we can use movie production as an instrument, as in the case of The International Human Rights Film Festival in Albania (IHRFFA) in Tirana, which educates people with the human rights concepts. The local government should cooperate with the Academy of Film & Multimedia Marubi or other professional agencies to produce promotional movies with touristic purposes.



Another need is an Information Tourist Service Center, which will not only reflect the image of the County but will also assist tourist in their needs. Last but not least is the publication of guides, brochures, and pamphlets to be distributed in a wide market, not only locally.

- Korça County is rich with tourist sites, but not all of them should be open to the tourists since the County lacks the resources to maintain all of them. The priority sites are the following.

Erseka –Saint Koli church (Rehova);

Korça and Devoll – Voskopoja bridge, Saint Thanas church, Saint Mehilli church, Saint Koli church, Saint Mary church, Saint Delliu church, (Voskopoja); Saint Jovani church, Saint Mitri church (Boboshtica):Saint Ristozi church (Mborje);Zoto bridge, Saint Pjete monastery and Saint Kozma church, Saint Prodhom, Saint Mitri church, Saint Mhilli church, (Vithkuq);Saint Gjergji church (Dardha);IliazBeyMirahori mosque, Elbasaniinn, Manastiriinn, Old Bazaar, Saint Mary cathedral, Vangjush Miho’s studio, Historic Museum, National Education Museum, Themistokli Germenji’s house, Mihal Grameno’s house, National Warrior Monument (Korça);

Pogradec – Pogradec Castle; Gradishta (Selca e poshtme); Golik bridge; Saint Marena monastery; Lin’s mosaic, Byzantine church remains; Maro Mokra’s house.

To be considered a priority tourist site a place or monument should meet several criteria. From the 116 cultural monuments presented by the MTCYS, I retain just the above to be open for the public because all of them are significant sites and are worth visiting, and as a whole the list will appeal to a variety of tourism types. People interested in cultural and historical tourism will gravitate to the selected cultural monuments. For

those who prefer the rural tourism, ecotourism or adventure tourism, Rehova (Erseka), Voskopoja, Dardha, Boboshtica (Korça) and Lin, Gradishta, Marena (Pogradec) are a great way to enjoy in-depth the traditional life style of the rural community. Tourists will be delighted not only by the friendly hosts but also by the breathtaking nature and delicious food. Although Korça County is a mountainous region, it still can offer the sun and sea tourism through Ohrid lake in Pogradec. A great advantage for these sites is their infrastructure. All of them are easily accessed by the available transport in the area. Any tourist will have no difficulties finding them due to the tourism signs positioned in visible locations with information in Albanian and English. Another important factor that influenced my choices is the fact that the communities near these sites are more predisposed to accommodate the tourists and are more familiar with tourism industry. Due to this, they offer a better service. It is not always professional, but without any doubt it is hospitable because this is what Albanians are famous for. The rest of the culture monuments that I did not include are worth visiting as well, but trying to get there can be difficult and sometimes impossible or dangerous. The entire list of the cultural monuments in the four respective districts can be found in Appendix II. With the right tour guide information tourists will have the chance to explore these sites, which will make them realize it was worth coming in Korça County. Currently people rely on personal guides, but making these arrangements can be very difficult. For those who do not have any Albanian acquaintances it is quite an impossible task to do so. For this reason I urge the publication of more accurate tourist guides, maps and updated contact information of the persons in charge of tourism in the county.

- Raising awareness within the Korça County community about the socio-economic importance of tourism development. This should involve creating community awareness of the cultural and artistic values and the heritage of the region. It is important to spread across the country the idea of traveling inside the country, in our case in the County of Korça. Operators and businesses are crucial in the local tourism so we should bring them together and encourage their partnership.

- Encourage and support the use of local products as much as possible. The service sector should be locally owned and visitors should be accommodated in bed and breakfast establishments. The local manufacturers for more craft goods and other products should be encouraged.

## Summary and Conclusion

The interest in tourism is a result of its role as an income generator that increases economic benefits throughout the country. In this way tourism can also be used as a way to reduce poverty. Yet, successful tourism requires rigorous cooperation among the government, private institutions, and individuals involved in this process. Taking into consideration the experience of tourism markets like China, Turkey, Dubai, and Greece, will help countries like Albania understand how the tourism industry evolves. In the case of China we realize the importance of adapting situations that have been successful elsewhere and incorporating new mentalities in the service workforce. Turkey is attracting more and more tourists from outside the country, not only because it has the potential but also because the institutions in charge of tourism and the government know how to sell the tourism product, combining the right price with good quality. Dubai is still living its moment of glory, although the financial crisis created by Dubai World has had a bad impact not only on the United Arab Emirate and the workforce coming from abroad, but also on the investors. On the other hand, Greece has always been one of the top tourism destinations, but the way the government managed the country in these recent years made Greece a good example of the saying “all that glitters isn’t gold.” We cannot ignore the lessons of these cases if we want to build a strong future for tourism development in Albania.

In addition to focusing on the future we should also consider the past and how it is affecting current events. In “General Consideration on Tourism in Albania” I examine the rich literature from various authors that depict the economical and historical development

of Albania in terms of tourism. Hall is one of the authors whose works were focused in the Central Eastern Europe and Albania, focusing on the late Communism period and the transitional to democracy. He argues that rural diversification is one of the main ways to reach sustainable tourism.

Important parts of the paper include information governmental reports and publications. They not only provided data but also helped me understand what needs to be done, like reorganizing the system, training the human resource, and developing a more Western approach rather than the Albanian “S’ka problem” attitude.

The focus of this study is Korça County. Historically this county has played an important role in the economical development of the country. It has the right potential to offer cultural, rural, natural (ecotourism and adventure), curative, sun and sea and business tourism. Regardless of its rich potential and numerous attractions, however, Korça County is not yet ready to develop a sustainable tourism industry. After careful consideration of the literature, survey data, and personal experience, I present the following suggestions as important actions that will help the development of tourism:

- Overcoming the negative image that Albania has in the international community;
- Boosting horizontal and vertical cooperation among government levels;
- Undertaking a capacity study and elaborating an international standardized system to gather tourism statistical data;
- Developing a safe and adequate service and physical infrastructure;
- Preparing a highly qualified human resource department to provide good service;
- Improving the tourism product;

- Introducing regulatory measures to prevent further erosion and degradation of the environmental resources;
- Developing a marketing and promotion strategy with year-round promotional campaigns that will serve as an image creator and will be used in the local and international market;
- Prioritizing tourism sites and deciding which should be used for tourism purpose, in order to develop a more manageable structure for investment, maintenance, and promotion. In this way the investments will be easily allocated. On the other hand the tourism activity will be easily organized and controlled. This will also prevent environment degradation;
- Raising awareness within the Korça County community of the social and economic importance of tourism development;
- Encouraging and supporting the use of local products.

If we understand the problems and circumstances, we can take steps to overcome them. In order to succeed, the government, businesses, and interested organizations need to be united and collaborate in building strategies to develop, keep up the tourism product, and raise tourism awareness within the community.

The government is the main actor in the development of tourism, and it needs to take a series of concrete actions. Among these are: the creation of an institution to monitor and guarantee transparency in the implementation of any tourism-related issues and harmonize prices with the service quality; the development of a safe and adequate transportation infrastructure, equipped with simplified and standardized tourist signs. While developing urban plans both the federal and the local government need to

consider the economic, sociocultural and environmental analyses in order to protect and conserve the natural and cultural sites from further environmental degradation, and to put stress on culture, heritage, and eco-tourism. Other actions that require joint federal-local governmental action are the betterment of the medical services, public safety, fire protection, and telecommunication and Internet service.

The highest priority of the government should be to solve the problems and contingencies created due to the “land legalization” law. As in the case of Club Med, there are other foreign investors that have been driven away feeling unsafe in investing their money in Albania. To this end, the government has already taken some steps to make Albania more attractive for investors. The Albania Real Estate Market Report 2009 (Biba, et al., 2009) presents a list of reasons why one should consider investing in Albania, such as (pg. 2):

- Free trade agreements with EU member countries;
- Reduction in health and social contribution from 20% to 15%;
- Foreign companies being allowed 100% ownership in Albania;
- A national registration center already in place making possible shorting the time needed for registration of new businesses;
- Simplification of licensing procedures;
- A reputation for being second in the world for protecting investors’ needs.

The report reveals that “the holiday homebuyers are looking into Albania, not only for its favorable location, yet also for its great tourism and investment opportunities” (pg.

3). In addition, the government has developed policies to ease the foreign investor's experience such as "no purchasing restrictions or company set-up requirements, along with no purchasing taxes." Based on the same report, Korça has already 10% more Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) than the rest of the country.

Supported by international economic-assistance organizations, the government should also train professional people to provide adequate service. Organizations such as GTZ and Netherlands Development Organization<sup>13</sup> (SNV) often offer training programs and advice on tourism product development. Both organizations assist local governments and businesses to plan for successful tourism in the long-term from cost-effective to environmental reactions. They also help individual tourism operators, associations and educational institutions to effectively meet their goals.

A very important step will be the elaboration of an international standardized system to gather touristic statistical data. For a better understanding of the tourism industry and planning we need feedback from the visitors in regard to the accommodation and travel service. To anticipate tourist behaviors and preferences we should make use of a tourist survey. In this way we will be more aware of what they need and where we should focus our planning, and in this way building a strategy will be easier and effective (Refer to the Appendix III for examples of the kinds that should be used.)

The key ingredient in almost all successful tourist sites is originality. Korça County has the right potential to offer a unique experience to tourists. One way to do so is through local products. If the service sector is locally owned and the local manufacturers

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<sup>13</sup> Netherlands Development organization (SNV) is a non-profit, international development organisation, established in the Netherlands in 1965 (Netherlands, 2009).



produce more craft goods and other products, tourists will be exposed to a more traditional and authentic local culture.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. I have attempted to offer suggestions and solutions based on international standards so we will have a greater chance to penetrate the international tourism market. This plan will be presented to interested investors in Korça County. The only way for this plan to come true will be if it has enough funding. My primary intention will be to create contacts with the local government and through them, to get familiar with the best way to carry on this plan and get the desired results.

In summary, there is a need for better planning to secure accommodation, infrastructure, and adequate tourism services. It is necessary, therefore, to increase the accommodations in the County with affordable prices. We should improve the standards of services based on international standards. Transportation should be improved and the roads that link the County with other national and international locations should be upgraded and given scenery surroundings. Successful tourism development involves conserving an unspoiled landscape and preserving distinctive lifestyles and cultural products. Tourism development cannot be achieved in a short period of time. It requires a well-planned strategy, better cooperation between the Albanian political forces, and more support by international actors. Despite the many political and economic problems, progress in the development of tourism will bring progress in other areas as well.

## **Appendix I**

### **The interview and the survey protocols**

The interview and the survey protocols are designed to assess tourism performance in Korça County and create the basis for a future development plan.

*Interview Questions*

1. Can you provide me with a short description of the tourism situation in Korça district?
2. What is the level of involvement of your organization in tourism development?
3. Which are the main problems in regard to tourism in Korça district?
4. What is the impact of tourism on regional economic development, employment and land use planning?
5. What is the tourism revenue in Korça district?
6. Do you think that Korça district can afford mass tourism?
7. What policy tools must be implemented to maximize tourism development?
8. What is the role of the central tourism administration in the development of tourism at regional levels?
9. Should tourism be promoted outside established administrative channels?
10. What are long and short term plans of the municipality in relation to tourism development?
11. What are the activities of Tour operators?
12. What are the effects of the hotels' standards and service in the tourism development of Korça district?
13. What made you chose Albania, and more specifically Tirana, in opening your university?

14. Compared with the European case, what is your opinion in respect to Albanian tourism?

15. What is your tourism vision for Korça district?

*Korça District Tourism Development Plan Survey*

1. Information about you:

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender: Female  Male   
Nationality \_\_\_\_\_  
Country of residency \_\_\_\_\_  
Current Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Education level: High School   
College Graduate   
Post College Graduate

2. How do you evaluate business investments in the field of tourism in Korça district:

Very Poor   
Poor   
Fair   
Good   
Excellent   
I do not know

3. What do you think about tourism services quality that the district has to offer?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. How would you evaluate them?

Very Poor   
Poor   
Fair   
Good   
Excellent   
I do not know

5. What do you think are the priorities to improve investment in tourism:

- Law of land legalization
- Social Infrastructure (for instance trained professional people, etc.)
- Physical Infrastructure (such as roads, hotels, etc.)
- Management (how well are tourists' sites managed)
- Service quality (such as quality of hotels, etc)
- Community Cooperation with Tourism Industry
- Public Order (such as medical service, fire protection, etc.)
- Prices
- Tourists Information Centers
- Others (specify please): \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not know

6. How are Korça district's tourism packages promoted?

- Very Poorly
- Poorly
- Fairly
- Well
- Excellently
- I do not know

7. What do you think is the best way to convey information for tourism:

- Media (such as local newspapers, governmental publicity, etc.)
- Friends
- Internet
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

8. Which media is most important?

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9. What is your opinion in regard to the tourism services prices in Korça district?

- Low Prices
- Reasonable Prices
- High Prices

10. Are prices in the tourism industry harmonized with the quality of service?

- Usually
- Not Usually
- I do not know

11. Is there professionalism in tourist services?

Usually  
Not Usually  
I do not know

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|  |

12. What do you think local government can do to improve tourism in the district?

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13. What would you change in regard to business investments in tourism?

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14. Please share your additional comments.

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*Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey. We rely on your feedback to help us improve tourism services. Your input is greatly appreciated.*

**AppendixII**

**Cultural Monuments in Korça County, Tourism Resources, and the**

**Annual Events Calendar**



The first two tables include the cultural heritage sites in Korça County and the tourist resources that this county has to offer. The third table is a collection of all the annual events that take place in the county, which would stimulate tourism activity if they are properly promoted.

*Culture Monuments in Korça County*

| <b>Culture Monument</b>    | <b>Location</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Gradishta Castle           | Barmash         |
| Gradec Castle              | Bejkova         |
| Gradec Castle              | Vrëpokë         |
| Nina Rock Castle           | Luaras          |
| The Tumulus East of Erseka | Erseka          |
| Postenan Bridge            | Leskovik        |
| Orgocka Bridge             | Orgocka         |
| Radova Little Bridge       | Leskovik        |
| Saint Mary Church          | Lashova         |
| Saint Mëhillit Church      | Shala           |
| Saint Mary Church          | Barmash         |
| Saint Mary Church          | Cërcka          |
| Saint Kolli Church         | Rehova          |
| Jani Verto's Guests Inn    | Postenan        |
| Baba Braho Masjid          | Qesaraka        |
| Hasan Zyko Kamberi Tomb    | Starje          |
| Mborja Castle              | Mborja          |
| Kolca Castle               | Kolca           |
| Koçaç Castle               | Koçaç           |
| Symiz Castle               | Symiz           |
| Trajan Castle              | Trajan          |
| Bilisht Castle             | Bilisht         |
| Bellovoda Castle           | Bellovoda       |
| Menkulas Castle            | Menkulas        |
| Podgori Castle             | Podgori         |
| Zvezda Castle              | Zvezda          |
| Dishnica Castle            | Dishnica        |
| Kuç i Zi Castle            | Kuç i Zi        |
| Gobesh Castle              | Moglica         |
| Gradishta Castle           | Shuec           |
| Gradishta Castle           | Zerca           |
| Prehistoric Settlement     | Vashtmi         |
| Prehistoric Settlement     | Maliq           |
| Prehistoric Settlement     | Barç            |
| Ventrok Castle's Wall      | Tren            |

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Polena Mosaic                                | Polena           |
| Wolf Cave                                    | Tren             |
| Spile Prehistoric Drawings                   | Shuec            |
| Turan Tower                                  | Turan            |
| Shulin Tower                                 | Shulin           |
| Gorica Tower                                 | Gorica           |
| Dishnica Tower                               | Dishnica         |
| Gopesh Bridge                                | Gopesh           |
| Voskopoja Bridge                             | Voskopoja        |
| Moglica Bridge                               | Moglica          |
| Zoto Bridge                                  | Vithkuq          |
| Saint Pjetr Monastery and Saint Kozma Church | Vithkuq          |
| Saint Prodhom                                | Vithkuq          |
| Saint Mary Church                            | Lubonja          |
| Saint Thanas Church                          | Voskopoja        |
| Saint Mëhilli Church                         | Voskopoja        |
| Saint Kolli Church                           | Voskopoja        |
| Saint Mary Church                            | Voskopoja        |
| Saint Jovani Church                          | Boboshtica       |
| Saint Mitri Church                           | Boboshtica       |
| Saint Ristozi Church                         | Mborje           |
| Saint Gjergji Church                         | Shipcka          |
| Saint Triadha Church                         | Lavdar           |
| Saint Mitri Church                           | Bezmisht         |
| Saint Mary Church                            | Vithkuq          |
| Saint Mëhilli Church                         | Vithkuq          |
| Saint Gjergji Church                         | Dardhe           |
| Saint Mary Church                            | Bezmisht         |
| Saint Mary Church                            | Maligradi's Cave |
| Saint Dëlliu Church                          | Voskopoja        |
| Iliaz Bej Mirahori Mosque                    | Korça            |
| “Elbasan” Inn                                | Korça            |
| “Manastir” Inn                               | Korça            |
| Old Bazaar                                   | Korça            |
| Elpiqini Niçe's House                        | Korça            |
| Vaskë Xengo's House                          | Korça            |
| Plokseni Theohari's House                    | Korça            |
| Xhafer Ypi's House                           | Korça            |
| Aleksandra Avrami's House                    | Korça            |
| Sokrat Mia's House                           | Korça            |
| Evanthi Dvorani's House                      | Korça            |
| Vangjel Budo's House                         | Korça            |
| Anastasi Dhimitri's House                    | Korça            |
| Vaskë Kote's House                           | Korça            |
| Frashëri Brothers' House                     | Korça            |
| Margarita Grameno's House                    | Korça            |
| Ngjelina Anastasi's House                    | Korça            |

|                                  |                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Andromaqi Melko's House          | Korça           |
| Filip Çekani's House             | Korça           |
| Afroviti Dushani's House         | Korça           |
| Ollga Minga's House              | Korça           |
| Marika Stratobërda's House       | Korça           |
| Ollga Xhamballo's House          | Korça           |
| Sotir Mihali's House             | Korça           |
| Donika Melo's House              | Koçisht         |
| Haki Spaho's House               | Sul             |
| Zafir Backa's House              | Sul             |
| Nazif Karameto's House           | Miras           |
| Ilo Kuneshko's House             | Boboshtica      |
| Ramadan Kanta's House            | Xerje           |
| Murat Joçë's House               | Xerje           |
| Syrja Haxhillari's House         | Gjonbabas       |
| Qamil Beqiraj's House            | Gopesht         |
| Dalan & Rushan Bashllari's House | Zvarisht        |
| Ramadan Kapllan Qose's House     | Qeska           |
| Beqir Hibraimi's House           | Strelça         |
| Idajet & Fuat Mirashi's House    | Strelça         |
| Halim & Ismail Xhaferi's House   | Popçisht        |
| Fani Kota's House                | Korça           |
| Saint Mary Cathedral             | Korça           |
| Vangjush Miho's Studio           | Korça           |
| Old French Lyceum Building       | Korça           |
| Archaeological Museum            | Korça           |
| National Education Museum        | Korça           |
| Themistokli Gërmenji's House     | Korça           |
| Mihal Grameno's House            | Korça           |
| Old School                       | Panarit         |
| First Female's School            | Korça           |
| Manushe Sheri's House            | -               |
| National Worrier Monument        | Korça           |
| Themistoki Gërmenji's Monument   | Korça           |
| Pogradec Castle                  | Pogradec        |
| Ballca Castle                    | Ballca          |
| Zemça Castle                     | Zemça           |
| Gradishta                        | Selca e Poshtme |
| Gradishta                        | Sallabinja      |
| Prehistoric Settlement           | Zagradia        |
| Jolla & Llëngea Bridge           | Jolla & Llëngea |
| Gollik Bridge                    | Gollik          |
| Niçë Bridge                      | Niçë            |
| Çezma Bridge                     | Çezma           |
| Zgalla Bridge                    | Zgalla          |
| Servatina Bridge                 | Servatina       |
| Terziu Bridge                    | Proptisht       |

|                          |              |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| City's Rocks             | Mokra's Cave |
| Saint Marena Monastery   | Llënga       |
| Lin's Mosaic             | Lin          |
| Byzantine Church Remains | Lin          |
| Maro Mokra's House       | Podgozhan    |
| Tushemisht's Mosaic      | Tushemisht   |
| Tren's Mosaic            | Tren         |

*Note.* The contents of the above Tables are taken from  
*Constitution of the Republic of Albania* (Republika, 2003).

*Korça County Tourism Resources*

| <b>Nr.</b> | <b>Tourism Resource</b>                                |  | <b>Location</b>   | <b>District</b> |          |
|------------|--|--|-------------------|-----------------|----------|
| <b>1</b>   | Water Resources  | Gold Spring  | Voskopoja         | Korça           |          |
|            |  | Old Lady Spring  | Bozdovec          |                 |          |
|            |  | Izvori   | Bozdovec          |                 |          |
|            |  | Saint Gjergji  |                   |                 |          |
| <b>2</b>   | Attraction Sites                                       | Drenova National Park  | Drenova           | Korça           |          |
|            |  | Mountain Chains of Morava, Bozdovec, Goat's Stone (Guri i Cjapit), and Çardhaku. |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Cold Water   | Bellovoda         | Vithkuq         |          |
|            |  | National Prespa Park   | Prespa            | Korça           |          |
|            |  | Saint Mary Church  | Liqenas           | Liqenas         |          |
| <b>3</b>   | Thermal Sources with Curative Value (Sulphurous Gases) |  | Vromeri           | Kolonja         |          |
|            |  |  | Sarandopori       |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Postenam          |                 |          |
| <b>4</b>   | Tourism Sites  | Big 'Rrapi' Tree (300 years old)   | Gërmenj           | Kolonja         |          |
|            |  | The Hollm's Treasure   | Leskovik          |                 |          |
|            |  | Ballabano's Foerst   | Ballabano         |                 |          |
|            |  | Glacial Lake of Gramoz   |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Sotira Spring  |                   |                 |          |
| <b>5</b>   | Flora and Fauna Monuments                              | Rodokali "Rrapi" Tree  |                   | Pogradec        |          |
|            |  | Upper Selca "Rrapi" Tree   |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Saint Marena Blackberry  |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Tushemish Sakllëm  | Tushemisht        |                 |          |
|            |  | Leshnica Oak   |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Bishnica Cold Spring and Cave  | Bishnica          |                 |          |
|            |  | "Guri i Topit" Lake  |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Cypress  |                   |                 |          |
| <b>6</b>   | Geo-monuments  | The Rock of Wealth   |                   | Korça           |          |
|            |  | Stoned Stack   | Trebinja          |                 |          |
|            |  | The Groom and the Bride Rock   | Senishta          |                 |          |
|            |  | Memelesh Cave  |                   |                 |          |
|            |  |  |                   |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Rodokal Cave      |                 | Pogradec |
|            |  |  | Baribardh Cave    |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Saint Marena Cave |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Najazma Cave      | Tushemisht      |          |
|            |  |  | "Qafë Thana" Cave |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Selca Canyon      |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Razhani Rock      |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Long Rock         |                 |          |
|            |  |  | Kozici Mountain   |                 |          |
|            |  |  |                   |                 |          |
| <b>7</b>   | Hydro - monu   | Driloni Springs  |                   | Pogradec        |          |
|            |  | Lukova's Lakes   |                   |                 |          |
|            |  | Lenie's Lakes  |                   | Korça           |          |

|  |                     |  |          |
|--|---------------------|--|----------|
|  | Homezh Fall         |  |          |
|  | Nika Rock Spring    |  | Pogradec |
|  | Tren Cave           |  |          |
|  | Tren Mummy Rocks    |  | Devolli  |
|  | Saint Thanas Forest |  |          |
|  | Dobragora Forest    |  |          |
|  | Vishja Fir          |  |          |
|  | Pihiri Poplar       |  |          |
|  | Bear Stone          |  |          |
|  | Progri Springs      |  | Korça    |

*Note.* The table is taken from the *Tourism Resources in the Albanian Districts* published in the MTCYS website (Ministria, 2009).

*Annual Events in Korça County*

| <b>Month</b>                       | <b>Date</b>  | <b>Event</b>                                   | <b>Place</b>    |
|------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| <b>January</b>                     | 7 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> | Christmas and New Year                         | Prespa          |
|                                    | 17 <sup>th</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup>                   | European Animation Show “Xinxifilo”            | Pogradec        |
| <b>March</b>                       | 7 <sup>th</sup>                                      | Teacher’s Day                                  | National        |
|                                    | 8 <sup>th</sup>                                      | International Women’s Day                      |                 |
| <b>April</b>                       | 16 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup>                   | Youth Show                                     | Korça           |
|                                    | 13 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup>                   | Pottery Fair                                   |                 |
|                                    | 22 <sup>nd</sup>                                     | Earth Day                                      |                 |
| <b>May</b>                         | 1 <sup>st</sup>                                      | May Day, International Labor Day               | National        |
|                                    | 13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> | Sotir International Photography Contest        | Korça           |
|                                    | 17 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Serenade’s Voices                              |                 |
|                                    | 21 <sup>st</sup>                                     | Saint Constantine                              |                 |
|                                    | 30 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Protagonist Show                               |                 |
| <b>June</b>                        | 1 <sup>st</sup>                                      | Children’s Day                                 | Korça           |
|                                    | 5 <sup>th</sup>                                      | For a Cleaner Korça                            |                 |
|                                    | 6 <sup>th</sup>                                      | The Carnival                                   |                 |
|                                    | 15 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup>                   | Cinema Week                                    |                 |
|                                    | 20 <sup>th</sup>                                     | The opening of touristic season                | Pogradec        |
|                                    | 21 <sup>st</sup>                                     | Ohrid Lake Day                                 | Voskopoja       |
|                                    | 24 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Saint Prodhomi                                 |                 |
|                                    | 25 <sup>th</sup> -July 6 <sup>th</sup>               | Park Sculpture Symposium                       | Korça           |
|                                    | 29 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Saint Peter Fair                               | Vithkuq         |
|                                    | 29 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Saint Peter Fest                               | Erseka          |
|                                    | 30 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Saint Ristozi                                  | Mborja          |
|                                    | n.d.   | Poetry Nights                                  | Korça/Pogradec  |
|                                    | n.d.   | Book Fair                                      |                 |
| <b>July</b>                        | June-July  | Live Music Week                                | Korça           |
|                                    | 1 <sup>st</sup>                                      | Satrivaçi                                      | Erseka/Borova   |
|                                    | 6 <sup>th</sup>                                      | Borova Martyrs Honor Day                       |                 |
|                                    | 10 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Saint Nicholas, Vithkuq Fraternity Association | Vithkuq         |
|                                    | n. d.  | “Lakror” Fest                                  | Korça           |
| <b>August</b>                      | 2 <sup>nd</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup>                    | Cultural Summer Week                           | Prespa          |
|                                    | 13 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup>                   | Beer Fest                                      | Korça           |
|                                    | 16 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Saint Marie Celebration                        | Dardha          |
|                                    | n. d.  | Folk Music and Popular instruments Festival    | Korça           |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup> | Culture Week   |  |                 |
| <b>September</b>                   | 29 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Cultural Heritage Day                          |                 |
|                                    | 11 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Folk Fest                                      | Prespe          |
| <b>October</b>                     | 25 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup>                   | International Painters Colony, Mio’s Day.      | Korça           |
|                                    | 28 <sup>th</sup> -29 <sup>th</sup>                   | Liberation and Independence Day                | National        |
| <b>December</b>                    |  | Wine Day                                       | Prespa/Pogradec |
|                                    | 6 <sup>th</sup>                                      | Saint Nicola’s Day                             | Erseka          |
|                                    | 20 <sup>th</sup>                                     | National Painters Competition                  | Korça           |
|                                    | 30 <sup>th</sup>                                     | Santa’s Parade                                 |                 |
|                                    |  | Year’s End Fair                                |                 |

**Appendix III**  
**Surveys**



To anticipate tourist behaviors and preferences we should make use of the following surveys. In this way we will be more aware of what tourists need and where we should focus our planning, and in this way building a strategy will be easier and effective.

*Hotel Accommodation Survey*

We hope you enjoyed your stay with us! To help us better serve you, please complete this survey and return it to the reception desk at your convenience. Thank you!

| <b>Statement</b>   | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| My overall experience here was good, and I would recommend this hotel to my friends. |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Check in</b>  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| My reservation record was accurate.  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| The check-in process was timely and efficient.                                       |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| The check-in staff was courteous.  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Guest Room</b>  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| My room was clean and comfortable.   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| My room was furnished appropriately.   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| My bed and bedding were comfortable.   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Guest Staff</b>   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| The guest staff was prompt, reliable, and friendly.                                  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| The guest staff was knowledgeable and fully answered my questions about the area.    |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| Security was available if needed.  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| Housekeeping staff was friendly and reliable.  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| Management was available to solve problems.  |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Food and Dining</b>   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| The food and dining staff was courteous.   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| The food quality was good.   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| Room service was timely and efficient.   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| Room service delivered the correct food order.                                       |                       |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Amenities</b>   |                       |              |                |                 |                          |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Hotel amenities (pool, hot tub, exercise room) were clean, attractive, and properly equipped. |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Check out</b>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The check-out process was timely and efficient.   |  |  |  |  |  |
| I received a complete and accurate bill.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Additional Comments:</b>   |  |  |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |  |  |

*Tourists Survey*

1. Information about you:

Date of Birth (dd/mm/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender:      Male       Female   
Country of citizenship/Nationality \_\_\_\_\_  
Country of residency \_\_\_\_\_  
Current Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

2. What was the purpose of your visit?

Vacation   
Business   
Visit Relatives   
In Transit   
Other (please specify)

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3. How long did you stay in Korça?

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4. How much money [in Lek (L), Euro (€), USD (\$) ] were you willing to pay on:

-Accommodation   
-Meals   
-Transport   
-Tour Guide   
-Entertainment   
-Shopping   
-Other Spending

5. Have you ever before visited this part of Albania?

No       Yes

If you check “Yes,” give approximate time and reason of your visit.

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6. How would you rate the service received during your stay?

|   | Excellent                | Good                     | Fair                     | Poor                     | Very Poor                |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
| Accommodation   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Food  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Touristic Sites (Historical buildings, museums, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Shopping  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. What are the activities you did during your stay?

- Visit Historical Buildings
- Visit Museums
- Visit Parks
- Hiking/Climbing
- Shopping
- Take part in a Sport Activity
- Visit the Traditional Villages
- Take part in Celebrations/Events

8. What other activities would you have liked to do?

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9. Would you like to visit this place again?

No  Yes

Today's date (dd/mm/yyyy) \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you very much for your collaboration. Have a pleasant and safe staying.*

*Travel Services Survey*

**Travel Agency Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**Fax**(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**Web Site** www. \_\_\_\_\_

We hope you enjoyed your trip! To help us better serve you, please complete this.

Thank you!

|   |  |              |                |                 |                          |
|---|--|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>   | Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/>  |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Age</b>  | 16 – 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25 – 34 <input type="checkbox"/> 35 – 44 <input type="checkbox"/><br>45 – 54 <input type="checkbox"/> 55 – 64 <input type="checkbox"/> over 65 <input type="checkbox"/> |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Nationality</b>  |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Education</b>  |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Profession</b>   |  |              |                |                 |                          |
|   | <b>Strongly Agree</b>  | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> |
| Agency responded promptly.  |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent was courteous and professional.   |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent was knowledgeable about the travel industry.                                      |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent explored several options and offered the lowest fare according to my needs.       |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent explained ticketing and fare options thoroughly.                                  |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent explained airfare rules and restrictions thoroughly.                              |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent recommended appropriate lodging.  |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Lodging reservations were accurate.   |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Agent recommended appropriate ground transportation.                                    |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Ground transportation reservations were accurate.                                       |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| Itinerary was accurate and was received promptly.                                       |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| My overall satisfaction with your service is high. I would recommend you to my friends. |  |              |                |                 |                          |
| <b>Additional comments:</b>   |  |              |                |                 |                          |
|   |  |              |                |                 |                          |

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