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PERSPECTIVES OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SHKODRA LAKE

Përmbledhje: Qëllimi i këtij punimit teorik dhe cilësor ishte vlerësimi i progresit të zhvillimit të ekoturizmit në Liqenin e Shkodrës. U hetuan shkallët e ndryshme të këtij zhvillimi, strategjitë dhe planet e veprimit në mënyrë që të jepet një kuadër i qartë i gjendjes aktuale, u vlerësuan standardet dhe metodat dhe janë dhënë rekomandime për perspektivën e re të zhvillimit të ekoturizmit në zonën Shqiptare të Liqenit të Shkodrës. Ky studim paraqet shkallët e zhvillimit të ekoturizmit në këtë zonë, një rajon me potenciale të mëdha për vlerat natyrore dhe mundësitë e shumta të promovimit të turizmit kulturor dhe natyror. Janë paraqitur potencialet kryesore të natyrës dhe kulturës që e bëjnë Liqenin e Shkodrës tërheqës për këtë tip turizmi, si dhe është vlerësuar oferta turistike për këtë qëllim. Bazuar në vlerësimet e këtij studimi, janë dhënë rekomandime për ndërhyrje në planet ekzistuese të veprimit dhe aksionet lokale për zhvillimin e ekoturizmit, veçanërisht për të gjetur mënyra krijuese për të ndikuar në sjelljen miqësore me mjedisin të turistëve.

Fjalë kyçe: *ekoturizmi, vlerat natyrore, miqësor me mjedisin, plane veprimi*

Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative and theoretical research was to evaluate the progress of development of ecotourism in Shkodra Lake. The different steps of this development, strategies and action plans were observed in order to make a clear framework of the current situation, standards and ways are evaluated and recommendations for the new perspective of ecotourism development in Shkodra Lake area Albania are given. This research presents the steps of ecotourism development in our Shkodra Lake area, a region with big potentials on natural values and good opportunities to promote cultural and natural tourism. Are presented the main potentials of nature and culture that makes Shkodra Lake attractive for this type of tourism and is evaluated the touristic offer in this purpose. Based on this research's findings, recommendations are given on intervening in the existing action plans and local actions for the development of ecotourism, especially on finding creative ways to induce environmentally friendly behavior of tourists.

Key words: *ecotourism, natural values, environmentally friendly, action plans*

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INTRODUCTION

Albania is one of the countries where both society and environment have suffered greatly during the transition period. Despite the great values of environment, the caused damages are high and substantial. Among the irreversible damages of environment and unsustainable use of natural resources before the nineties and during transition period, the lack of environmental education is one of the important determining factors in environmental and social situation in Albania. Changes since 1991 have not led to significant environmental improvements. A number of challenges have arisen, in addition to inherited problems. The environment and efforts for its protection are still considered as a matter which belongs to „the state” or to „the others”, rather than individual and community responsibility. The level of the citizens’ awareness towards the environment needs to increase, as well as the level of their involvement and participation in development of policies, strategies or decision-making processes. The tourism development and especially the natural tourism in several zones are causing a lot of environmental problems to. Tourist needs the structural changes on infrastructures, which always damage the natural areas, they need logistical and consuming, so they produced a lot of waste, they need water and detergent use. Tourists transport is another point of the impact of tourism development in natural and protected areas.

Albania is very famous in richness of the natural values and touristy potential. The Shkodra Lake is the biggest in Balkan Peninsula and very important for the city and its suburbs. The Shkodra Region includes also the Buna embouchure and the Viliuni Lagoon which are also distinguished for the riches of ornithofauna, for the species with scientific interest and some other species in different grades of threatening. (Sokoli & Dhora, 2008). The protection of this richness, linked with the economical profit and future sustainable development of the region, needs the awareness of the community and especially of the young people. Cultural heritage, traditions and meals are also very attractive for tourists. Nowadays this industry is well developed around Shkodra Lake in both countries, although in Albanian part there are problems with tourist infrastructure, low enforcement and environmental education of people. (Anonymus, 2009; Dibra & Sokoli, 2008).

The article is presenting the situation of tourism development around Shkodra Lake, but in the same time is giving recommendations on development of sustainable tourism and natural tourism in the shores of Shkodra Lake. It is giving an example how to increase the environmental performance and the quality in the tourism sector and how to create a global partnership for sustainable tourism. This is based on sustainable tourism that respects the minimum standard that any tourism business should aspire to reach. Criteria for sustainable tourism which aims to foster understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles are related to the vision for the development in Shkodra Municipality which is: Shkodra as an important economic center, university center and center for regional exchanges were are harmonized the beauty of nature and his-

tory together with the cultural heritage, and a attractive place for living and hosting people. (Annonymus, 2010; Dibra & Sokoli, 2008).

METHODS

Surveys and questionnaires in tourist agencies, research of documents in the Municipality of Shkodra and Podgorica, research in the development and tourist offices in Municipalities are used to have an idea on how tourism development is going and how it can be performed as a sustainable tourism.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In touristic zones around Shkodra Lake is needed the effective management

Tourism development in the natural areas should maximize the benefits of society and the economy of the local community, take into consideration cultural heritage, take into the consideration the environment and minimize the impact. Around Shkodra Lake, mostly in Albanian part is developed a seasonal tourism with a big number during summer. The great number of tourist us bringing money for the community, but also is creating a lot of environmental problems around the Lake. Large quantity of waste is produced, hotels facilities are enlarged and large use of detergents is damaging water and soil, increase of transport during summer days is polluting the air etc.

The use of eco-camping could be a good way to minimize the negative impact of massive tourism and daily tourism. Eco-camping is taking in consideration the environment quality and consulting with local citizens. Aims of eco camping are linked three together environmental protection, quality of live and safety equals to the economic benefit and continuous improvements of the campsites. The main goal of eco camping is to increase the satisfaction of guests through high service quality, minimizing and recycling waste and using energy and water efficiently. Damaging neither soil nor water supplies with sewage, designing and maintaining camp sites in a nature oriented way and cleaning in an environmental friendly way. Avowing the use of environmentally damaging materials, processing and selling regionally produced products, considering nature and the environment with the choice of leisure's activities, safety for stuff and guests. No ones from our tourist agencies is registered as a member of eco camping organization and possible in Shkodra Lake shores is needed the creation of the Shkodra Lake foundation as an independent NGO working in the field of eco camping. A good way should be introducing the eco camping management system and applying on- site consultations and workshops. The issues for them should be focused on environment protection, waste, energy, water, cleaning, site design and safety.

The benefits of using eco camping in Shkodra Lake shores

For participating sites are: cost reduction, energy, water, waste, detergents, quality and safety, exchange of experience with other camping business, image and marketing activities.

For regions the benefits are foster sustainable tourism, support regional services and products, public relations and marketing.

As a natural ecosystem Shkodra Lake is one of the most representative and important of wetlands habitat for plants and animals (Dibra & Sokoli, 2008). Has a particular significance as a resting and wintering area and the most important inland body for Albania and Montenegro too. This is possible only in a region with favorable geographical position especially the location of the Lake.

Landscape

The greatest challenge in the area of land development facing the international regions is the necessity to stop all further settlements of the landscape and constructions on all available spaces. Settlement planning must be based to a greater extent than today on responsible land and soil usage. Building land in communities along the Lake is more expensive than in adjacent communities, so that more multi-storied buildings are being constructed. In urban use planning at local level the area of Shkodra Lake in eastern shores is evaluated as a recreation zone. In terms of transport the area is not so overcrowded, but the new strategy of transport is promoting the use of bicycles in a big path-way. Also are considered to build weekend houses, bathing areas, public parks and other recreation facilities. Considering the degree of the scale protection in the zone should be considered that the construction of embankments and shore line constructions impact the nature because they alter the direction of the current, lead to erosion and sedimentation, inhibit the capacity of the shallow water zones to cleanse themselves and destroy the habitats of the fish populations.

Tourism

With approximately 800000 Euro annually, Shkodra Lake in Montenegrin, but also in Albanian part is among the most significant economic factors. About 42000 tourists per year visit each year the shores of the Lake in both sides. The Lake and its harbor regions is the most important magnet for vacation guests and locals in their leisure time. 65% of the annual visitors are concentrated on the most important attractive place in Virpazari, Podgorica in Montenegro and Shiroka in Shkodra, in Albanian part. (Anonymus, 2009). These visitors cause important environmental problems especially in the field of traffic. Up to now, the measures to inform and sensitize these visitors have been inadequate. It would be good to introduce the all-inclusive pocket as a touristic product, and to make valid the groundwork for the mobility of tourist, but also to include web based information system, which should combine public transportation schedule with destinations in the region both for Albanian and Montenegrin part. (Dibra & Sokoli, 2005). As a favorite venue for water recreation Shkodra Lake shores are used as beaches, camping grounds and lake-shore walk ways, but still now are not registers for watercrafts, tourist in eco-campings. Another negative impact is the damage of the shore zone and the shallows, the sport and recreational activities cause disturbances and damage to the sensitive animals and plant population. Particularly the Lakes shallows bays are favorite places to

anchor boats or for bathing, but are preferred habitats of endangered plants and animals. The most valuable shore regions and shallows should be closed to water sport or recreation either temporarily or throughout the year.

Agriculture

The part of the Lake landscape which traditionally was cultivated in a natural way is even today dominated by agriculture, but there is not controlled the use of pesticides in some villages located around the lake. For Albania, during the years 1992–2009 the number of agricultural businesses has been decreasing steadily in the last decades. The number of businesses for which farming was the main income has almost halved, while farming as a second income source of economy has dropped by 35%. The majorities of the agricultural businesses are running in a traditional way or in accordance with integrated farming practices. The proposition of organically cultivated area is about 28% and almost 75% of all fruit growing businesses cultivate their fruit in an integrated way. We don't have precise number of the organic farms registered, so big challenges for promote sustainable agriculture as integrated part of sustainable development should be the identification and the promotion of agricultural and organic products in both shores of the Lake. Also ecological farming should be supported and could be extended. This would lead to a noticeable reduction of pollution caused by farming in Shkodra Lake. Due to increasing demand alternative farming should be developed and ecological products should be offered in big stores and this will lead to cheaper products. The multifaceted landscape as it has been shaped by generations of farmers can only be preserved through farming and forestry that take natural and social factors into account. Regional marketing of goods from environmentally sound protection must be supported in order to sustain the structure the landscape has taken on, as well as the natural variety of plant and animal species. Farmers and foresters, in the future will determine the shape of Shkodra Lake landscape through their activities on over 70% of the land (Sokoli, 2004).

Fishery

Shkodra Lake is reached in species and big quantity of individuals for each (Sokoli & Dhora, 2008; Sokoli, 2004). The availability of the fish is depended on the season. In general the catch yields in summer and autumn are higher than in spring and winter. Where as the purchase of fish for business are greatly depended on tourism in both parts of the Lake. Mostly fishermen are family firms or two generation working together, the number of professional fisherman is decreased and most of them there are not aware for the values of fish resources. By the government side so much is done for law enforcement, efforts are done to stop illegal fishing which is not big, but remains a problem.

Forestry

Around Shkodra Lake 32% of the surfaces is forest. In both regions Albania and Montenegro the potentially natural vegetation is broad leaved trees (Sokoli, 2004).

Wood working and manufacturing are an important economic factor. The forests are having a lot of problems, starting from the decrease of their surfaces and pollution. For the good management of forest in the shores of Shkodra Lake is needed

- further forestry in Shkodra Lake regions which is close to nature, by increase use and marketing of wood from the region
- increasing the profits of the forest owners

Service industry of tourism

The main industry service in Shkodra Lake is tourism. Natural and historical tourism are well developed due to big natural potentials in landscape around the Lake, biking and hiking paths, navigation in the water of Shkodra Lake and Buna River. In Albanian strategy for the tourism for 2008–2013 development of ecotourism and natural tourism is considered as a new approach for tourism support in Shkodra Region. Although there is not a great density of tourism enterprise in Shkodra Region new premises are for the support of natural tourist groups. From Shkodra Municipality in collaboration with tourist agencies registered a number of 155000 tourists during years 2000–2009, the number was increasing after 2006, and from them 52% were attracted by natural region, Shkodra Lake, Shkodra castle and Buna River.

Balnear tourism, ecotourism, mountain tourism, bike, hike, nature trails and excursions are new premises for tourism development around Shkodra Lake. The extraordinary importance of Shkodra Lake region as a natural and cultural landscape deserving protection is underlining by the existing numerous nature areas and protected landscape areas. Most of them are protected as protected areas or reserves and also Ramsar sites. The legal framework for nature reserves is different in both part of Shkodra lake and must be unified in order to protect better the natural and cultural heritage of the Lake. The promotion of more nature protected areas should diminish the number of tourist visiting the lake and could contribute in more protection of the biodiversity, in order to protect the valuable and sensitive shallows.

Administrative and political framework

As a rule the governments of both countries bordering the Lake hold responsibility. Few international agreements have been established for the environment protection of the Lake and Buna River. Ramsar sites in both countries are protected by development of massive tourism and extensive agriculture.

CONCLUSIONS

Ecotourism and sustainable tourism should be the approach of tourism development around Shkodra Lake.

Common activities should be taken and financed by both Albania and Montenegro governments.

Tourist agencies should provide touristic pockets including tours Albania – Montenegro and vice versa.

Nature trails and environmental education activities of tourist should be included in the tourist tours.

In order to preserve the Lake ecosystem from further degradation an International Commission is created and should provide not only low enforcement, but also investments in the eco-tourism development around the Lake.

Natural and cultural heritage around the Lake should be promoted through activities of civil society and communities.

Local documents and strategic plans for the development of regions should consider the existing values in natural and cultural life of the communities.

Shkodra Lake in Albanian part, does not have a profile towards ecologically- oriented tourism till now. A regional eco-label, legal requirements, subventions, or special formations to distinguish and to promote sustainable tourism does not exist.

Seasonal tourism is causing more problems with the environment pollution.

There is no cross-border protection concept for a the whole Lake shore line and water body, no declaration of common protection areas, and no assimilation of existing cross-border protected areas.

Regulation for water sport and hunting, as well as other forms of interaction with the natural landscape must be internationally/inter-regionally coordinated for protected and not protected areas in the shore zones and shallows.

The EU Water Framework Directive is a new innovative approach to protect all water-rivers, lakes, costal waters and ground waters. The role of the public in the sustainable management of protected areas is substantial.

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