

# TOURISM AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ALBANIAN ALPS (VALBONA VALLEY – THETHI – RAZMA – VERMOSHI)

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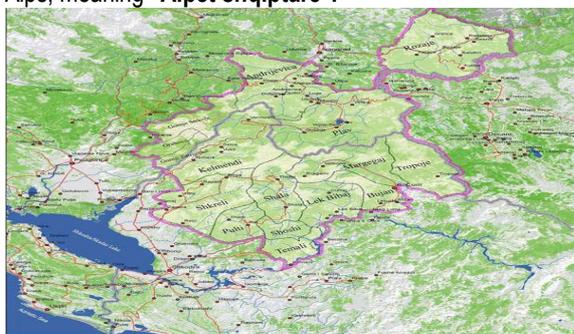
## Abstract

The study aims at identifying the actual natural sources of Albanian Alps with characteristics, which could and might be parts of a broad touristy tour with the bordering countries as Montenegro and Kosovo. It is important to compile a full map of mountainous tourism. By a quick geographical survey, all regions Valbona Valley – Thethi – Razma – Vermoshi are situated in the north of Albania. Based on prosperous natural sources that the North Region of Albania presents and relying on the hospitality tradition, we intend to do this study in order to stimulate the development mountainous tourism. The main objective will be the realization of a territorial survey aiming for the development of tourism. The description of natural resources will be accompanied with the identification of many problems, which might require an intervention aiming at the development of these area. The study intends to encourage investments especially in infrastructure and superstructure that will hasten the development of the area in general, making tourism as an economical support of the region and it would have a positive impacts .We also will try to prepare an example of a tourist package like concrete product of this paper.

**Key words:** natural resources, sustainable development, mountainous tourism, environment, economy

## Introduction

In both Serbian / Montenegrin and Albanian, the name means "accursed mountains", probably because they are perceived as wild. Albanians also called it the Albanian Alps, meaning "Alpet shqiptare".



Prokjetje/Bjeshket e Namuna project area

Tourism has been known for the inhabitants of North of Albania, when citizens from Shkodra and other cities went there on summer vocations in the houses of the highlanders. Thethi is included in the Protected Zone, National Park of second category since 1966. At the beginning of 70-s the summer vocation residency was built and many visitors attended it in summer. Meanwhile, the beginning of 90-s seemed that everything was going to be ruined. Although the devastation embraced the inherited touristy residency, the wonderful nature still had a good influence on people. The inhabitants considered their region as a great chance to secure incomes out of it and to try to live better in another state system.

Even migration brought about the movement of population the North of Albania, still emigrants have paid attention for their birthplace. Meanwhile, the inhabitants have clearly understood that tourism might be the only means of living and securing incomes. Therefore, they have begun to welcome visitors in their dwellings in summer time. The devastated infrastructure, the bad road conditions, lack of phone contacts, of TV signals, of power supply have hampered the initiative of the locals to invest on tourism. However, the wonderful natural resources have prevailed over the obstacles that the whole Albania, especially the North of Albania is suffering for the moment. Due to a very difficult life because of no employment with any support of

emigration, some of the inhabitants have started to renovate the houses. They are adapting them for summer visitors which they hope to increase in number. The visitors are mountain climbers, explorers fond of nature or just ordinary people who prefer to enjoy fresh air. Therefore, the number of visitors has been increasing everyday. High mountains, beech woods, pastures, cold fresh springs, special potentialities of a mountainous touristy zone, the beauty of nature enables great chances for the development of tourism in all seasons.

## THE HYPOTHESIS, GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

### The Hypothesis

In most cases, tourism is used as a method, which brings large economic benefits in a country. And that tourism is beneficial to the host country, while bringing increased standard of living for residents of that country. Destinations can be called the most important part of tourism because without tourist destinations will not be able to exist tourism. Also keep in mind that the destinations are available, when they create opportunities for management and development.

○ **H1. If a country could have called a destination, it must offer resources and attractions for tourists and foremost need to please them.**

○ **H2. That the tourism exist in a destination, should be planned and well managed.**

### Goal

Identification, evaluation and promotion of mountain tourism potential, and finding ways to promote and develop a sustainable mountain tourism in the Albanian Alps ( Bjeshket e Nemura).

### Objectives

- 1-Identification and Assessment of tourism potential in the Albanian Alps
- 2 - Identify the problems and benefits for the development of sustainable mountain tourism
- 3 - Promotion of tourism products in these destinations.

### Research Outline

Sketches used in this research is exploratory sketches which enables us and helps us in understanding the problem and the deeper meaning of it from our side as demanding.

**The choice of sample**

104 questionnaires were distributed for reasons of convenience in the study. People were random study destinations.

**Secondary data**

The creation of this paper is derived from secondary data which are an important element as to the creation of an idea to clear the problem but also to the creation of concepts on the topic of study. These data are mainly taken from the Internet but also by many publications lectures or lecturers of the University of Shkodra.

**Primary data**

These data are important information generated by processing run of tourists questionnaires , residents and tour operators in destinations. The questionairs are taken to have been built to handle the information necessary to achieve the goal and objectives set. Contact is realized face to face interviews over the phone we used in the context of interviews and electronic mail for obtaining information.

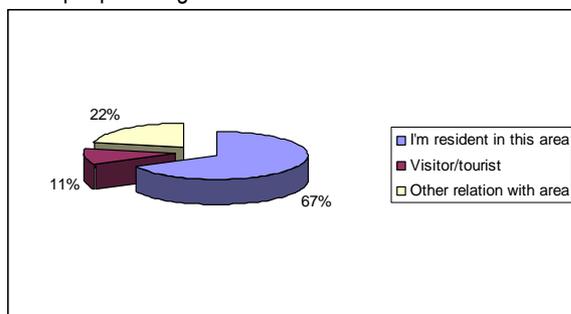
**Search Restrictions**

During the research we have faced with many difficulties and obstacles of different nature which led to the realization of a qualitative study. Among these we can mention the difficulty to obtain broad territory for study. Information very poor to say no to Albanian areas where we advertise the biggest tourist destinations are Valbona-Thethi-Razma-Vermoshi, unlike the southern areas that have information. In this period is a little difficult even for finding the tourists as this is the beginning of this season. Tourist guide to authentic by any private or state institution if found not published or cast on the Internet.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**Analysis of questionnaire & results**

In order to serve the achievement of the study objectives was realized a questionnaire in the region of Valbones-Thethit – Razmes- Vermoshit. 104 questionnaires were divided for these 10 in Valbone, 24 in Theth, 37 in Razem and 29 in Vermosh. The questionnaire was divided casually to the people categorized as below:



**Graf 1. Relation with region**

Through the interviewees came out that 67% of them were tenants of the region (Valbones- Thethit – Razmes-Vermoshit). Meanwhile as visitor/tourists were 11% of them, an unacceptable figure to accept their answer results as representative for this category. In the end 22% of them had other relations with these regions, which means that they do

not live permanently, but in one way or another they are region actors which have a particular interest for their development. During one year the region was visited by 3% of them which were mainly abroad tourists who remained surprised from the beautiful nature of these regions and pretended to return again. During 1 - 5 years the number of visitors increased rapidly. More common are those visitors that have more than six years coming here and the number is about 38%. This category was represented mainly from ex-tenants of these regions. While 24% of them have 10-20 years visiting these regions. And is exactly this category which may give a right judgment weather these regions have evolved through years.

The results based on time staying are:

Time	%
Back within the day	0
One night	6
Two nights	15
3-5 nights	59
6-10 nights	12
More than 10 nights	8

**Tab 1. Time staying of visitors in %**

The higher percentages are presented from the time staying over two nights.

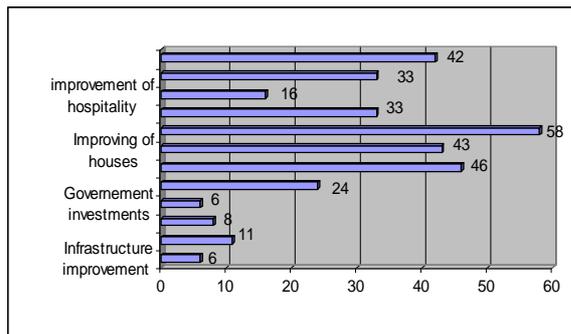
From the upper results is viewed clearly that the staying 3-5 days has the higher percentage. We think that comparing this with the staying of the past years, which do not passed two nights, has to do with the improvement of the accommodation , because of some investment done in their favor. Except this we think that an important role play also the interest of the tenants to increase tourism as one way to improve currency and for which is not necessary a high rate of money. This is typical for tourism features (alpine) that offer this regions and accomplishing the desires of this visitors category which do not require a high level accommodation. As for the foods they want especially those that are traditional. From the visitors category, the highest percentage is covered from Shkodra city, while the other section from Lezha and other regions. While the abroad tourists are mainly from USA, Germany, and Austria.

The attention devoted to the tourism development, is also reflected from the given thought of the question that where do you think that your region will have a higher development, where the top place is holder from tourism. Theth is a region that historically was inferior and the nature was generous with it giving a possibility to develop the tourism. This is taken in consideration even from the tenants (39%) which are investing toward this direction. Typical for this region is the population flow toward the civilized countries or abroad and what is worth to be mentioned is that the money are invested in tourism direction.

Vermosh is not mainly focused in tourism because the primary thing of this region is farming (45%). Nature condition and the created tradition stimulate the

development of this limb. However tourism is ranked second (25%) from the importance of the region development which shows that this branch is developing with the help of the tenants of Vermosh. In the area of Razma the first place is economic assistance 34% and 25% livestock as the only possibility of earning income, while tourism has started recovering in particular the establishment of the new accommodation in the area. If you look and Valbona Valley from the questionnaire it appears that income residents provide economic aid and farming but the future for these areas seems to be being directed towards sustainable mountain tourism. Its important to mention the fact that incomes are growing because of tourism an we think that gradually this direction will take the most important place. This is supported even more from the response of the questions that have to do with the fact that if regions like these are considerate as touristic destinations. 47% consider them as touristic destinations and 14% not. The other question was that if tourists compose a life source for the region where 58% are totally convinced about this, and 3% does not consider this fact as true.

The main directions influenced from the growing number of tourists is reflected in the below chart:



**Graf 2. Principal directions of Tourist coming influence**

In this point questionnaires gave more than one response, that's why presented result is done in points number that every direction has taken. From the results is seen that the main direction influenced from the growing number of tourists is that of growing local produce because these regions have always related economical increase with the increase of manufacture produce. Except this, important is also the intervenient of local administration in order to realize improvement. A good improvement is seen also in the houses that will accommodate the tourists, because this was an important thing in growing the number of tourists and extension of their staying. While the revival of the life of the area is more pronounced in the area of Thethit where the data taken from the field are currently 12 families with 56 people total. While it currently has less impact by increasing the number of tourists are precisely those that are currently absent or very small as investments by foreign investors in infrastructure improvements which the latter leaves much to be desired. Pleasure that accompanies the tourist after he or she has been in these regions are related with the regions attractiveness. We can also mention for example: quietness, restful environment, and also hospitality which is highly estimated by tourists.

Dissatisfactions are related in general with the absence of simulative politics toward investments, where the first place is occupied by infrastructure.

Even though exist these problems that cause dissatisfactions for the tourist, to see weather them are ready to turn back again, was made a direct question – would you come back again here? The answer was positive. From the questionnaires tourists/visitors 70% answered yes because sattisfactive experiences were bigger than unpleasant. They also were positive that the future will be better. This will be accompanied by increased opportunities to extend the staying time in these areas from 1 week to 15 days.

**Demographic data** : In the questionnaire were involved 104 people, from which 61% men and 39% women.

Divided by ages and educational level are:

Ages	%	Educational level	Nr
18-25	11	No school	4
26-35	9	Primary school	21
36-45	16	8-ages school	44
46-55	20	High school	23
56-65	29	University	12
Up to 65	15		

#### Interviews with tour operator (mountain guides)

From the study of all areas and on the tourism offer they have went out with a result, it comes to some tourist guides in several sports in the mountainous areas, so we have a tourism product. This product was presented to several tourist agencies and hotels in Tirana in the tourist areas of our work involving.

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www.mtitravel-al.com

The opinion of this agency was pro guides and mode of presentation of thanks as well as with various combinations intinerary by type of tourists and their demands for the guides and with their price that we think is reasonable. Tourist Market thought this guide are those that would be the youth of Tirana, schools and various student's faculties.

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For Gulliver Ok everything was in order and preparation within the criteria that should be a guide. The target market for this kind of tourism in the Alps areas they feel are the tourists will come from the West in particular student.

#### Albania Holidays Shpk.

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This travel agency goes beyond being thought of two groups that identified the aforementioned agencies, but tends to revert to weekend tourism. For groups over 15 people they seek another price per person as well as accommodation conditions much better than are actually.

**Example of a tourist package as concrete product of this study. New Guide / day 13**

**01.First Day**

• Arrival at the Mother Teresa Airport, meeting and the group assisted by our representative, transferred and accommodated in a hotel in Tirana. Free time in evening.

**02.Second Day**

• After breakfast, depart to visit Kruja - picturesque hometown Scanderbeg (Albanian National Hero).  
 • visit the Castle and the Skanderbeg Museum.  
 • keep track toward Shkodra. Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum visit.  
 • Visit Rozafa Castle, founded in 3th BC, built on a rocky hill and surrounding the three rivers Drini, Buna and Kiri  
 • Dinner in Shkodra. Free dinner

**03.Third Day**

• Morning, after morning trip to Skadar Lake, including visits to the islands of the cathedral  
 • Return to Shkodra to dinner, free evening

**04.Fourth Day**

• After breakfast, transfer by car to Lake Koman ferry-Shkoder-Fierze.  
 • Trekking Fierze-Saint George.  
 • Evening in camps set up by the group or village houses in the village Shengjergj.

**05.Fifth Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: St. George-Neck Kolcit-Bajram Curri. Transfer by car to the city of Bajram Curri-Dragobi.  
 • Dinner and accommodation at village home.

**06.Sixth Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: Dragobi-Yeast-Dragobi bars.  
 • Dinner and accommodation in village houses reception, Dragobi.

**07.Seventh Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: Cerem-Dragobi-Dunishe  
 • Dinner and accommodation in village houses waiting Dunishe.

**08.Eighth Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: Dunishe-Kukaj-Rros-Rragam.  
 • Dinner and accommodation in village houses Rragam.

**09.Ninth Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: Rragam-Neck-Gjelaj-Theth Valbona.  
 • Dinner and accommodation in village houses Theth

**10.Tenth Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: Theth-Boge Tamar.  
 • camping tent or house Village ascension Tamara

**11.Eleventh Day**

• After breakfast Trekking: Tamara-Vermosh.  
 • Dinner and accommodation in village houses Vermosh

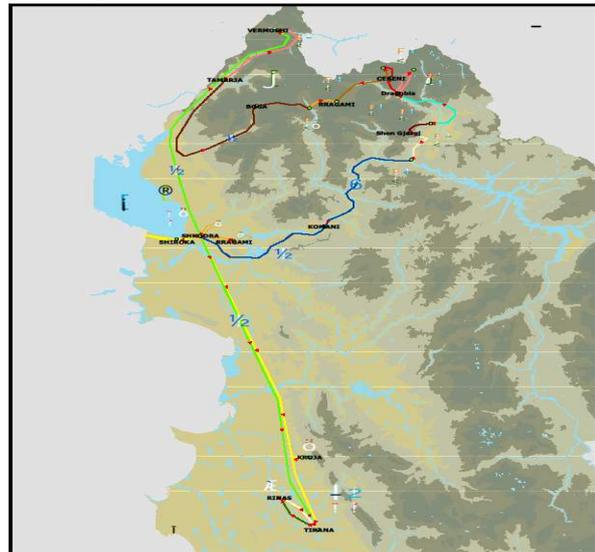
**12.Twelfth Day**

• After breakfast, transfer by car in Tirana.  
 • A short tour in the city. Dinner and accommodation at hotel

**13.Thirteenth Day**

• After breakfast, we visit the historic National Museum in Tirana.  
 • Free time, then transfer to the airport.

**Itinerary TIRANE – THETH – VERMOSH**



**CONCLUSIONS**

- ❖ Tourism is considered as a priority of the inhabitants for the economical development.
- ❖ Main incomes come from emigration.
- ❖ Regions have the necessary potentialities for the development of tourism and the number of tourists increases their incomes.
- ❖ The biggest threat of the area is that of abandoning the territory of its residents .
- ❖ In the period of winter blocking of roads causes disconnection of communication with the rest of the country, the threat of natural factors, lack of basic human services such as health assistance or care for school education.
- ❖ Lack of financial capital for business development of tourism.
- ❖ The low level of awareness of community property law.
- ❖ Poor quality of public infrastructure to serve tourism.
- ❖ Low level of tourism facilities and services such as hotels, motels, homes host, restaurants, places of entertainment, information systems, cultural and sports.
- ❖ Lack of professional and qualified human resources.
- ❖ Insufficient investment by Central Government
- ❖ Lack of information packets which are presented natural landscapes, mountains, flora, fauna, historical sites, archaeological sites, cultural and religious holidays.
- ❖ Tourist agencies themselves do not include in their guides Albanian Alps , especially for foreign tourists who are not informed about this destination

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ The objective of tourism development will be to improve the tourism product by relying on tourist structures and investing to fit environments for sustainable development
- ✓ Promoting rural tourism and agro-tourism, hunting tourism, promotional activities through the development of a package of information and human capacity to attract tourists.
- ✓ Prior to "compile" a guide to know for how long are tourists, in what are mostly interested and some socio-demographic data for them.
- ✓ Establishment and formation of organized management structures for tourists in these areas which includes office information, brochures on the area, maps of terrain with the necessary information, in Albanian and 2-3 foreign languages .
- ✓ In addition it is important to be stored capacity of the number of tourists who can consume the mountain area without degrading the environment (building) and in accordance with the possibilities of space available for construction, water security options, food ect.
- ✓ Increased tourism activities through acquisition of other alternative routes by using human and other resources in the area. Introducing the concept of tourist guide and the formation of suitable people to realize this function
- ✓ To increase tourist attraction, should be created and named a day listed as Mountain Day.
- ✓ Should support the production and marketing of local food products and beverages (honey, cheese, meat, fruits, brandy, Boza, etc..) traditional cuisine and handicrafts / artisan.
- ✓ Creation of a tourist route close polycentric or Albanian Alps called the Nemura Beshket would enable us to attract a greater number of tourists to this region, thanks to the alternation of their network through the resort. In this itinerary will have more access points, many directions of movement, will include many potential tourist regions as Shkodra, Sarda, Razma, Boga, Thethi, Vermoshi, Plav-Guci & Rozaje-Peje etc. Such an itinerary would be very special, that will meet all expectations of the tourist and would be a solid basis for a genuine and sustainable regional development.

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