

TOURISTIC POTENTIAL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CURATIVE TOURISM IN THE ALBANIAN TERRITORIES

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Abstract

Albania and Albanian lands offer significant potential for tourism development. Based on these potentials, in our region develop several kind of tourism such as: balnear, mountain and cultural tourism, ecotourism, agro tourism, sports and religious tourism etc. Show interest also the curative tourism. The main purpose of the curative tourism movement is to maintain or improve health. The curative tourism in Albanian territories is based on curative values and significant potential they offer. Based on these values is developed the traditional curative tourism that exploits the thermal mineral waters. Today curative tourism represents an opportunity for the development of curative spaces. This work was focused on the identification and evaluation of touristic curative potential of our region. Primary, secondary and tertiary potential create optimal conditions for the development of curative tourism. Their evaluation enables to find appropriate ways for both development and general economic recovery of curative areas. Through analysis, monitoring, field observations and contemporary studies in this field has been point out also the socio-economic importance of curative tourism in areas where it is developed. According to the importance of this kind of tourism, it is necessary to intensify efforts to strengthen policies and strategies for the development of curative tourism, to develop curative infrastructure based on European standards, to promote curative values left in limbo through preparation of guides. It is important also the involvement of communities of the curative areas in tourism development, the professional qualifications of the young generation with new concepts of curative tourism, increased local and foreign investments in this area etc.

Key words: *curative tourism, touristic potential, importance of tourism, curative infrastructure.*

Introduction

“Tourism involves the movement of people from their place of residence to another place where they stands for leisure time or for work at least for one night.”¹

This definition is closely related to modern tourism and to the involvement of all elements of the tourism phenomenon from origin, such as displacement, duration, motivation, etc. Tourism is considered an important factor with several effects and products in many sectors as the economic, environmental, social, cultural, etc (Bagnoti 2009). Its development is related to the natural or cultural potential. For our region it is based on numerous touristic potentials they offer. Based on this potential are developed different types of tourism such as: balnear, mountain, cultural tourism, ecotourism, agritourism etc. Interest shows the curative tourism which represents one of the earliest tourist movements in this area. Curative tourism relies on curative potential. The main purpose of curative tourism movement is maintaining health or improving it (Dh.Doka, B.Draci, 2009). In Europe and beyond the main types of curative tourism based on the theme and of the country, are:

1. Traditional curative tourism associated with the use of thermal mineral water. His tracks come from antiquity and today is offered by such terms as llixha and spa.
2. Mountain curative Tourism related to the good and healthy climate. For a certain group of the population that is most sought tourist attraction to provide better health.
3. Curative and welfare tourism: the new trends of the time enable the combination of traditional curative tourism with those of welfare to draw for the period of stationing² the traditional curative tourism.
4. Balnear tourism (talasotherapy): movement of population in coastal areas with coastal climate. The main motive is the treatment of diseases under the effect of the sand and sun baths.
5. Therapeutic tourism, developed in the late twentieth century, involves the movement of certain group of people, mostly higher layers. They visit medical centers to ensure eternal youth. Cures include from blood tests to surgical interventions (<http://www.dec.unich.it>).

For Albanian territories I will focus on natural and cultural potentials that enable the development of traditional curative tourism mainly based on the use of thermal mineral water.

Material and Methods

To identify touristic curative potentials in our region and the importance of curative tourism in the areas where those potentials are concentrated are analyzed:

1. The national literature, focusing on studies of authors in the field of human geography and of geological studies.

¹ ÈTO

² Regione Campania, Assessorato al turismo, linnee guida per lo sviluppo turistico, pg 91. Italia 2002, <http://www.sito.regione.campania.it>

2. The developments of the curative tourism in Albanian territories, based on field observations

The analysis will be conducted through:

1. Monitoring the effects of curative tourism in areas where the curative potentials are concentrated;
2. Monitoring the interventions of government, local authorities and private investors regarding the promotion of curative values in Albanian territories.

Results

Curative Tourism, for the specifics that presents, is under the influence of stimulant factors. Main factors for development are tourism potentials. For Albanian territories natural and cultural factors are optimal for the development of curative tourism.

1. Primary Tourism potential

1.1. Natural-geographical offer

The natural- geographical offer represents the base of curative tourism potential. It relies on natural factors that have a direct impact on tourism development (Dh.Doka, B.Draci, 2009). Natural factors that support curative tourism are:

The geological construction of Albanian regions. Our areas with a favorable geological position, are rich in thermal mineral springs. They are closely related to geological, geological history and traces of volcanism. The geological construction provides a rich chemical-mineral composition of thermal waters increasing their curative qualities. (Kruja geothermal area, Peshkopi and Ardenica) (A.Frashëri, V. Cermak et al, 2004)

Water Resources. The curative tourism development is directly linked to them. The very numerous thermal mineral springs (Akademia e shkencave 1991) have enabled since the earliest times the movement of people to cure their disease and to ensure physical welfare.

Climate and air purity. The movement of tourists and the duration of their stay are closely associated with climate of the areas where the thermal springs are concentrated. A good part of the thermal springs and host structures are surrounded by forest, offering visitors fresh and healthy air.

Table 1.1. Curative potentials in the Albanian regions

Natural curative potential in Albania	Natural curative potential in Albanian regions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thermal mineral springs of Elbasan: Central Llixha (spa) and Llixha (spa) of Hidraj 2. Thermal mineral springs of Peshkopi 3. Thermal mineral springs of Bënjë (Përmet) 4. Thermal mineral springs of Bilaj (Fushë-Krujë) 5. Thermal mineral springs of Leskovik 6. Thermal mineral springs of Rexhan 7. Thermal and mineral spring of Mamurras (A.Frashëri, V. Cermak et al, 2004) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thermal mineral springs of Kosovo: Pejë, Kllokot, Mitrovicë etc (S. Laci, 2006) 2. Thermal mineral springs of the ex- Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Dibër with Kosovrast and Banjishtë etc (S. Laci, 2006) 3. Thermale springs of Albanian regions of Serbia: Valley of Preshevë (Preshevë and Medvegjë) 4. Springs of Albanian regions of Montenegro: Idalgo etc.

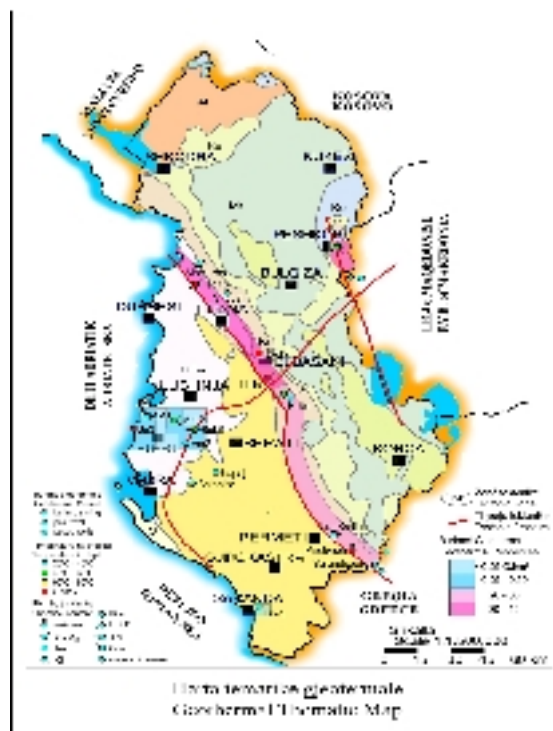


Fig.1. Geothermal Map of Albania³

1.2. Geographical and cultural offer

Geographical and cultural offer is presented with a rich material and spiritual culture that supports the development of curative tourism. In various European countries a phenomenon prominently showed is that of "*excursionist*". In our region it is conceived by the movement of the visitors to see historical cultural and archaeological buildings and by visiting curative centers for treatment and to spend free time. This movement can be also in the opposite

³ Atlasi Gjeotermal i Shqipërisë, Universiteti Politeknik i Tiranës, Fakulteti i Gjeologjisë dhe Minierave, Tiranë 2004, faqe 18

direction. In this offer important place take elements of folklore and of culinary. For albanian territories can be mentioned:

Elbasan: foreign tourists that come to visit the castle of Elbasan as one of the most field forts in the Balkans, and other objects of worship, tradition and culture (Bevapi et al. 2003) after visiting this city can attend curative spaces in Llixha (spa) of Tregan and Hidraj. Emerges as a task of central and local authorities and also of private investors to raise the quality of services provided in the standards of the countries where come from these tourists. We must not forget also the adaptation of traditional curative centers with elements of "thermal welfare".

Peja is rich with history. There are archeological excavation, christian monuments (12), muslim monuments (23), kulla and tyrbe bektashiane (cult objects). The majority of visitors appreciate in Peja the Carshinë e Vjetër⁴, as environmental motives with importance for tourism (M.Muhaxheri, 1989). In the center of town is the old mosque built in 1471. Tourist that visit all these objects may end up by visiting the curative center only 12 km from the town of Peje.

2. Secondary and tertiary tourism potential

2.1. Curative tourism infrastructure. Ensure all equipment and services available to satisfy the needs of tourists. Infrastructure included hotels, restaurants, curative structures, resorts for families etc. In the curative spaces of albanian territories host curative structures focus more on those with private character often with nuances of family service. The services offered are not at the same level of those of neighboring countries and beyond. In this regard, strategic interventions should focus on infrastructure and urban regulation according to the relevant specifications. (Tregan Municipality, Petran, Peshkopi 2012)

2.2. Population and economy. The population of the curative spaces and their economy are directly related to the development of curative tourism, by mutual influence. In some areas this tourism has become the basic elements of survival and the main base of economic development. Residents have set up hosting structures for visitors (FSHZH, 2009). This exploitation has brought income o for the community while on the other hand uncontrolled exploitation of thermal resources by residents has polluted environment is areas and tourist image of curative spaces. The situation is different in Albania and in areas outside its borders. In Albania there is a chaotic use of them while in areas outside the border of the Republic of Albania management of mineral thermal resources for tourist purpose is more controlled. (Institute of Physical Rehabilitation Medicin Ahmet Blakaj Pejw, 2012)

2.3. Curative tourism policies. They determine the development proceeding of the curative tourism. Are included strategies, development plans, and long-term measures. (Dh.Doka, B.Draci, 2009). From field surveys are showed that on most of the areas where the curative tourism is developed strategic efforts are few. In some curative areas efforts are made to place curative tourism on the focus of strategic developments such as in: Tregan and Petran (FSHZH, 2009) Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports is focused less on the development of curative tourism. (Ministry of Tourism, 2013).

⁴ Cultural heritage

Discussions

The importance of curative tourism in social and economic development of the curative spaces.

Based on the tourism potentials, curative tourism developments play an important role in social and economic life of the curative regions. Importance is expressed in the overall development of the albanian tourist space as follows:

- 1. Curative tourism development creates good opportunities for economic development of curative areas with perspective for the future.** In curative lands of albanian areas, curative tourism is emerging as one of the best opportunities for their economic development. This tourism enables the development of other branches of economy (FSHZH, 2009). It is also associated with this tourism the development of the agriculture, handicrafts, processing of agricultural products .With the interest for these areas, is the training of the young generation to respond better to the requirements of curative tourism. This development guides the physiognomy of curative areas on the focus of economic development
- 2. Curative tourism development increase employment of the community of curative spaces.** Nowadays where the first and second sector of the economy does not allow the employment of the population, the third sector and tourism provide alleviation of unemployment. In curative areas economy except agriculture, curative tourism provide best opportunities for employment. It provides not only employment but encourages the training of community's population and staff, to better suit the growing demands of visitors and new trends of curative tourism development.
- 3. The development of curative tourism helps increase community income.** Curative tourism brings benefits to the community of curative areas. Income generated support budget mainly of the municipal.
- 4. Curative Tourism development adjusts image of curative space.** In many European countries and beyond curative tourism enables the creation of modern curative centers, creating a unique and modern image. After 90's image of curative albanian areas leaves much to be desired. Inappropriate use of thermal resources by local population is accompanied by degradation, pollution of thermal sources and decay of image of the spaces. With the intervention of the government, FSHZH and various organizations in many curative areas, development plans are designed to ensure measures to regulate the image of curative spaces.
- 5. The development of curative tourism promotes values of certain spaces of country, region and beyond.** Curative tourism enables the promotion of curative values of a given territory. This promotion increases the number of visitors both local and foreign. The acquisition is manifold: rise of incomes, interaction of cultures, confidence in national values, economic development, etc.

Conclusions

In the albanian territories, development of curative tourism has passed in different stages and has been influenced by historical and political developments. Tourism potential offered, enable his current development. At a time when tourism is considered as one of the most perspective branches in our region, becomes important the role that curative tourism plays in areas with curative tourism potential. According to the importance that it has, it is necessary to intensify efforts to strengthen:

1. Policies and strategies for the development of curative tourism;
2. Development of curative infrastructure with european standards;

3. Promotion of curative values left in limbo;
4. Preparation of guides;
5. Community involvement in tourism development;
6. Professional qualification of the new generation with new concepts of curative tourism and of welfare;
7. Local and foreign investments in curative tourism etc.

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