

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIGRATION AND TOURISM- THE CASE OF VRF TOURISM IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

This article explores the linkages between migration and tourism as an important social and economic contribution to the destination country of Albania. It deals with these two fields of study which have known a growing interest from academics and policymakers but their relationship is less studied in the case of Albania. During 2015 the number of tourists had a considerable increase, but the numbers of foreign tourists visiting Albania and migrants visiting their origin countries are not given separately. We believe that the second group consist an important aspect of the touristic demand which should not be neglected. This relationship between migration and tourism motivations can be a particular studying area that helps to provide development and welfare for the engaged communities and to enrich culturally their society.

Migrants or tourists have both an origin and a destination; migration in itself may induce visiting friends and relatives, including travels there for special occasions, and may be seen as a generator of tourism demand, with the increasingly two-way flow of migrants visiting their countries of origin. (VRF tourism). This is often an *ethnic tourism* or *roots tourism* when migrants of first or second generations visit touristic sites in their origin countries, but not only. Even though the boundary between the migrant and the tourist is often blurred this flow needs a careful study. It determines a significant demand for both inbound and outbound leisure tourism. VFR tourism is closely associated with the history and development of international or national migration; exploration of the influence of country of origin on migrant travel behaviours can provide a context for understanding the motivations associated with inbound tourism and migration.

Through this article we aim to enhance the importance of VFR within tourism and travel research in Albania, phenomenon which is often under recognised in the study of touristic flows. We conclude that, besides other types of tourism, the development of VFR tourism shapes the tourism industry.

Keywords: *Tourism, Migration, Visiting Friends and Relatives, Albania.*