

CULTURAL TOURISM IN GJIROKASTRA

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Abstract

Cultural tourism is gaining a great importance in the modern tourism industry, and it also represents an important and attractive power for local and international tourists. This allows destinations and regions to expand their customer basis, winning in this way new clients interested in different types of attractions and diversifying their offer, especially in cases of destinations which have no tourism typology (such as coastal and lake tourism), and cases which are required out of the tourism season, reducing in this way seasonality and having all year round tourism. In this paper our study refers to the valuable assets of Gjirokastra city, as part of the World Heritage Tourism, which are rich, diverse and scattered throughout the prefecture. In the recent years there has been a rapid growth in the foreign and local tourists visiting this country and playing an important role in the development of tourism and the incomes of this prefecture. According to the official data of Gjirokastra Municipality in 2009 the number of visitors was 15894 while in 2014 it reached 35000. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of cultural tourism, of heritage and events, and the theoretical background of the relationships between the concepts of tourism, culture, heritage, and events by analyzing their impact in these destinations closely related to the management, marketing, and the economic impact, of the involved and interested parties and their relationship with the local development. The methodology is based on a descriptive analysis based on the data obtained from a survey conducted to 300 tourists who visited Gjirokastra in 2013-2014 through a self-administered questionnaire. We are also referring to a study which was done by Gjirokastra Municipality in 2011. This study has identified the origins of the tourists visiting this place, the reasons for the visit and their touristic expenses. It also treats a number of problems, determining in this way the necessary conditions to introduce these cultural destinations to the tourism market. Finally the paper is concluded with some recommendations and conclusions for tourism stakeholders in the country. It is important to identify relevant strategies for

cultural tourism through cooperation between government bodies and the private sector as an important factor for the promotion of Gjirokastra city as a tourist destination for local and foreign tourists.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, event, cultural heritage, festival, impact, destination development

Introduction

Culture and tourism have a mutual beneficial relationship which can strengthen the attractiveness and competitiveness of regions and countries. Culture is always an important element of the tourism product, which also creates diversity in a globally crowded market. At the same time tourism provides an important tool for cultural growth, creating incomes which can support and strengthen cultural heritage as well as its culture and creativity. Creating a strong relationship between culture and tourism helps destinations to become more attractive and competitive as places to live, to visit, to invest and to get employed. It is clear that development, especially tourism development is inseparable from culture (UNESCO, 2007). Culture is seen as a natural partner of tourism. The changes in today's world, and the transformations in the social and economic structures brought by globalization developments in information and communication technologies, have made tourism cultural dimension an important subject which should be taken into consideration (Berriane, 1999). The development of mass tourism is not considered a good solution for the economic development. Tourist destinations are doing more about sustainability, environmental protection and cultural heritage preservation. The demand for authentic experiences including interest in heritage, local culture and nature based experiences were noticed as recent developments in the tourism market (Poon, 2003). WTO (2005) has cited cultural tourism as one of the segment with the fastest growth in the global tourism. We cannot deny the important role of tourism and culture in the process of creating and shaping the image of the environment in order to meet customer needs. Culture is increasingly used by cities and regions as a means to preserve their cultural identity and develop their socio-economic vitality (Ray, 1998; 5; Richards and Wilson, 2006; 1210). UNESCO (2002) has determined that culture is "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features which characterize a society or a social group. It includes lifestyles, basic human rights, values' systems, traditions and beliefs". Culture in its wider definition provides a range of material and symbolic resources which are abundant in the supply of tourism offer (Rojek&Urry, 1997). Culture has to do not only with its internal value but also with the way it is used. This on the other side raises questions about ownership and access to culture, (Robinson, 2001) and it

also raises questions about the ways in which culture is “readable” by specific typologies of tourists. The cultural product highlights and generates the essence of the society, affected by the culture of the potential tourist (Robinson, 2005). There are interesting studies that cover more theoretical aspects of cultural tourism and its relationship with heritage and arts (Hughes, 2000; McKercher&Cros, 2002; Smith, 2003). Heritage is an inclusive concept which consists of many different values, such as cultural, natural, historical, architectural, archaeological and geological. It is a picture of different lifestyles and habits, in other words different cultures and eras of mankind and the societies that they live in. A well-preserved heritage enables communities to learn about their history and culture in a chronological order. After World War II, the world has seen a gradual increase in technology and urbanization which is becoming a real threat to social, environmental and economic heritage. Due to migration and industrialization the density of population between rural areas and cities has a significance difference. Globalization changed people’s lives in an undeniable way and heritage as a source that cannot be renewable but it should be preserved in the most efficient way. The word "preserve" has existed since the beginning of human history, but today this definition refers only to the protection of physical assets, which turns out wrong. Preserving must be seen and treated as a process that should protect national heritage in social, cultural and economic aspects. It aims to preserve, use and develop heritage and to support the values by giving importance to heritage and its management according to the principles of sustainability. There are studies that provide detailed cases of links between politics and cultural politics, notions of community participation, issues of authenticity and commodification, interpreting cultural tourism, and transformation and mobilization of culture for tourism purposes, Richards (1996, 2001) and Robinson (1999). Sigala and Leslie (2005) provide studies on managerial and commercial aspects of cultural tourism (e.g. withdrawal management, marketing, sustainability, and new technologies). The binomial heritage-tourism has caused an increase which has been very evident in historical cities or cities declared as “World Heritage” by UNESCO. These places are establishing monuments’ tourism and reference destinations for cultural tourism and this even in the context of urban growth trends, where they have a promising future. Tourism demand is changing at the same time as the rest of the motivations of leisure time, and cultural tourism is being considered as a higher level of mass tourism, consumerism and escapism. This requires a good knowledge of the demand and a focus on the customer, in order to satisfy an increasingly demanding tourist, together with proposals based on market segmentation and specialization. As a consequence the need to configure the offer of cultural tourism in terms of resources and infrastructure available to destinations was

evident. For these reasons national and regional governments should make great efforts to obtain official accreditations and certifications for cultural and historical attractions, for example through the World Heritage sites (WHS) and UNESCO label. This is especially important for a country as Albania which is internationally known for its historical and cultural resources and in the recent years this offer has increased the tourist demand. Some researchers have investigated and claimed that the cultural heritage and the attractions of a country are important determinants of tourism. The demand for tourism products of history and culture increases tourist flows (Carr 1994; Markwell et al 1997; Alzua et al 1998; McIntosh and Prentice 1999; Herbert 2001; Vietze 2008), while others conclude that it is not possible to find a clear positive relationship between cultural flows and tourist flows (Cuccia and Cellini 2007). In attractions and cultural flows other things such as cultural art exhibitions (Di Lascio et al. 2011) or museums and monuments (Cellini dheCuccia 2009) have also got an important role. The museums' role and the heritage commercialization are often part of the debates about national identity (Herbert, 1995; Lowenthal, 1998). Museums, as well as galleries and heritage sites, along with other glamour objects of cultural tourism, are regulated through state cultural policies.

State cultural policies and their role in the development of cultural tourism

Jim Butcher provides an overview of the connections between politics, culture policies and attractions. According to Butcher contemporary culture politics and cultural tourism are problems of the growing pluralism, democracy and the social involvement. In a postmodern context the rise of populism and the increasingly political correctness raise questions about the “universal” culture against the “special” one. Many writers have written about the important political dimensions of tourism in a wide range of topics. Hall introduces us to the political nature of this massive global industry, at both macro and micro policy (Hall, 1994: 4). More specifically, important political issues are related to cultural tourism such as, the role of museums and heritage commercialization which are often part of debates about national identity (Herbert, 1995; Lowenthal, 1998). Museums, as well as galleries and heritage sites, along with other glamour objects of cultural tourism, are regulated through cultural state policies. Cultural policy should be taken into account, formulated and seen under the light of broader cultural policies, instead of being seen as a technical issue for the implementation of the given objectives (McGuigan, 1996, 2004). Politics provides a bridge between cultural policies on one hand and cultural attractions on the other. It is part of the debates about culture, for the importance of cultural diversity in

the development and marketing of “cultural cities” (Landry, 2000), and the evolution of museums to reflect a wide variety of historical experience (Walsh, 1992). It also discusses UNESCO’s tendency to promote a diversification of traditional cultures away from economically developed countries, and the selection of these destinations in the World Heritage Sites (UNESCO, 1994). Culture evolves with people as a guide to live well with each other as biological species in an environment where it is set with the available resources to guide the evolution of this culture. Cultures are living systems which evolve constantly in conditions such as the pressures of the increasing number of population, resource availability and changes. The evolution of a culture is also influenced by its contact with other cultures. When cultures interact with each other, there is an inevitable exchange of ideas, values, rituals and products. Cultural diversity is the ability to learn through intercultural dialogue. This because every culture has evolved in a unique environment with a unique set of physical and human resources, and each of them has a specific set of instructions for adding life to cultural assets. In the 21st century globalization in the form of global markets, free trade and mass tourism, offers endless opportunities for cultural interactions that open the door to cultural dialogue. Cultural dialogue is effective only when each participant sees the other as equal.

Benefits of Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a kind of special interest tourism which drives the request of participation in new and deep cultural experiences, as well as aesthetic, intellectual, emotional or psychological ones. It includes cultural heritage tourism and it is defined as visits by people from outside the host community. These visits are wholly or partially motivated by interest in historical, artistic, or scientific offers, lifestyle, the community heritage, the region, and the group or institutions (Silberberg, 1995; 363). This definition recognizes that the visitors’ motivation to experience the culture is somehow the feature that separates cultural tourism from other forms of tourism (Cros, 2001; 165). Even though the impact of tourism on host communities is discussed in tourism literature, the issue of interaction between the host community and the tourists has only recently received the necessary attention. In order to promote cultural tourism the starting point is having cultural resources which have the potential to attract tourists, the determination for strategy development and the promotion of cultural tourism. The market of cultural tourism is still largely in its infancy "(McKercher, 2002, p. 37). The strategies to encourage development and promote cultural tourism are based on the importance of cultural resources as tourist attractions, market size, the reasons of tourists visiting these cultural

resources and the benefits of cultural tourism. The benefits of developing cultural tourism include:

- Projects which are environmentally sustainable, culturally appropriate and take into consideration the impact on all those who will be affected by them.
- Increasing the incomes of the existing businesses from the revenues generated by the visitors of the cultural tourism.
- Creating jobs and opportunities for new businesses, for craftsmen, crafts, supply stores, tour operators etc.
- Diversifying the local economy by generating jobs for recreation, guides, suppliers of sports' equipment, professions for teachers, package tours, transportation options, webs and graphics.
- Attracting visitors with interests in cultural heritage and traditions, history, events etc.
- Creating opportunities for partnerships such as artisan cooperatives, local food, and farmers' markets.
- Increasing revenues by attracting visitors interested in historical and cultural events, and helps in keeping them as long as possible in the destination. Preserving and strengthening local traditions.
- Generating opportunities for local investments in cultural resources from the community.
- Building community pride and the image of the destination.
- Creating the possibility of promotional materials on websites, and advertising tourist destinations to make them more attractive.
- Attracting investors (banks, foundations) interested in sustainable economy and in investing in these destinations.

Events' tourism and its importance in motivating tourists

Events' tourism is defined as a concept of special interest tourism which has significantly contributed to the tours, leisure time and entertainment becoming in this way a strong factor generating tourism demand. Events are one of the important attractions of destinations which provide tourists with updated information about the culture, the society and the history of these destinations. Events are considered as important activities within a destination which cause urban development, regional stability, actively promotion of destinations, increased investments especially tourism investment, employment growth, and socio-economic contribution to the region. It also causes the development of infrastructure and superstructure: such as transportation, and housing.

Other factors that can contribute to a successful event may include increasing visitors' stay time at the destination, increasing visitors' spending,

raising population awareness about the benefits of events, and increasing civic pride or community solidarity. On the other side events are good motivators and promoters for tours and they become a precious and important treasure in increasing the number of tourist visits. Events are also cultural, social and financial wealth which aims the full use of its abilities to achieve the development of tourism and community benefits in these destinations (Getz 1997, 16). Festivals and public celebrations are found in all societies and are increasingly seen as an attracting and image factors for destinations with a variety of other special events. They play a major role in intercultural exchanges among people in the world and provide a significant contribution to the development of the host cities of these festivals. Festivals are celebrations such as dance, drama, comedy, movie, music, different kind of arts, crafts, local culture or ethnic heritage, religious tradition, historically significant events, food and wine as well as religious ceremonies (Getz, 1999: 126). The original thing about festivals comes from the fact that they are out of the ordinary life, away from celebrations and entertainment media. Festivals are usually organized with the aim to protect and develop the local culture and history recreation, enable local employment and the development of tourism industry (Günersel, 1997: 28). They also attract tourists who are willing to travel to these destinations in order to share the experience in contact with local people. Getz (1991: 69) defines tourism events as tourism activities that include festivals and other activities. Festivals and other events are defined as the creators of the image of destinations and tourist attractions. In fact societies trying to make a profit from the tourism industry try to seek originality from community oriented festivals (Delamere and Hinch, 1997: 27; Higham and Ritchie, 2001: 43). Community festivals and special events are more developed in local level and the festival is an instrument used for the marketing of destinations and for empowering the local economy. Moreover, festivals are considered one of the most important holiday motivations (Getz, 1999: 326). Identifying such incentives is a prerequisite for effective event planning and marketing programs for the visitors (Crompton, McKay, 1997).

Cultural tourism potentials and their effects on destination development

Tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage have special features and are a very strong potential. They become a tourist resource by being transformed into products sensitive to the nature of the region where they are rooted. The effects of these resources are conditioned by:

1. Market demand and proximity to destinations and urban population, because it means more services to meet the demands.
2. Continuity. Organizing constant activities to support and facilitate investments. Transitional events can help to improve and increase the

image of the destination, but they do not provide a sustainable development for the destination.

3. The participation of local agents in cultural assets by transforming them in activities that last throughout the year, attract foreign and local tourists, and cover the needs of the local citizens (not only in the season).
4. The concentration of cultural assets creates synergy among the organizers and may generate additional visits. It helps in the average duration of these visits by increasing the overall spending of the visitors.

Special events are essential to understand how the dynamics of cultural tourism which can permeate a destination, facilitates the development. These effects are not always measurable, since it is often difficult to tell if attending events is the main reason for the visit or the occasional activities carried out during the visit to the destination (Getz, 2009). The relationship between events and the potential regional development has been analyzed more from the prospect of economic and social impacts, and less from the perspective of the environmental impact (Getz, 1997; Getz, 2008). The effects such as the presence of events and festivals in local communities, can be explained in three different levels: 1. as a social **impulse** which consists in acquiring and developing a sense of community identity and pride in cultural heritage, 2. as a generator of economic benefits, long term promotional incomes, forced and directed revenues or increased values, and 3. as an element of a fundamental portfolio of local tourism product ready to stimulate demand during the low season, in order to create opportunities for joint action and to improve the enhancement of the destination image (Callot, 2002;. CHHABRA et al, 2003; EC, 2007). Without denying the positive effects there are also negative socio-economic effects which are related to the life interruption of the host population, the interruption of normal daily routine during the celebration of events, noise increase , heavy traffic, crime emergence, residents exodus, and the excessive use of infrastructure, etc. (Litvin& Fetter, 2006; Wood, 2005)

Gjirokastra

Even though Gjirokastra is a special town in southern Albania; it represents and has the same development history and similarities with the way of the foundation and formation of the European cities from antiquity to the Middle Ages, from the Middle Ages until the European Renaissance. The uniqueness of the history of Gjirokastra and something which is worth considering is an onward taking and giving with all the Drino Valley. Around the III century BC Drino valley was at the peak of the development and presents a different profile from Apollonia, Butrint, Dyrrah, Korkyra,

Dodona or Byllis. Drino Valley transcends historical phases by shifting the urban center, precisely the Antigonea decline, and after that the Adrianopoli, in another fortified center, which gradually became, the nucleus of a new civilization, that of Gjirokastra.

Historical records first mention Gjirokastra in the late antiquity about the V century AD, and later as an episcopal center in the X century AD, exactly the time of the recording of Albanian principalities and the fortification of Gjirokastra, as a major center at the intersection of important thoroughfares towards to the scaffolds of Onhezmi, Butrint, Yanina continuing up to Nikopol. In 1336 the Byzantine chronicles used to name Gjirokastra "Argyropolihne". It turned to the center of Zenebishëve princely (Zeneviseve) and in alliance with GjinBueShpata owned a large part of the Despotate of Epirus. In 1432, Gjirokastra fell under the Turkish rule. This long period of wars, results in a real urban and social disaster for the city. However, Gjirokastra and its people tried all the possibilities and opportunities to maintain the relations with the Christian West, and this not only in the spiritual way. They found "small trails" in the economic closure of the Ottoman Empire and took advantage of the many informal relations with the West. The Turkish chronicles of the 1583 present Gjirokastra as a sandzak center, with 434 houses and which was in possession of Albanian lands from Chameria to Mat River.

The Turkish chronicler EvliyaÇelebi visited Gjirokastra in 1672. His realistic description can be taken as an attested moment of the forming of the Historic Centre. According to the Turkish chronicler EvliyaÇelebi during this period the Turkish administration, the garrison and the mosque were added to the Castle. According to the European scheme outside the walls were Varosh, Pazari I Vjetër (Old Bazaar) and ten other neighborhoods. Later studies in Kikino, Baboçatë, Babameto, Toro, Shaplo, and Mezinatë houses speak for the important construction period that belongs to the last years of XVII century and the beginnings of the XVIII century. The city aqueduct which brought water to the castle water tanks from Mali (mountain) i Gjerë was also built in this period. This is also the period when the fully city planning scheme of the historical center was formed. In the period of Ali Pasha Tepelena (the beginning of XIX century) the castle fortress was re-constructed, and a series of monumental houses were built: Zekate, Kabilatet, Babaramo, Galanxhitë, Hadëratë, etc. The last phase of the intervention in the historical city center is at the beginning of the twentieth century. A strong wind of changes coming from the West is widely reflected in the psychology of the city's citizens in Gjirokastra, even in the lifestyle and also the typical constructions.

Gjirokastra is a special town in southern Albania. Because of its history, and its construction; Gjirokastra is described as "Chronicle in Stone"

from our great writer Ismail Kadare. A chronicle which made this a strange city and which seemed to have come out of a mountain. It made Gjirokastra famous, before it was announced a Museum City in 1968, before it was known in the world and much earlier than was listed on UNESCO. Gjirokastra is famous not only for the architectural side, "under its every stone, sits a hidden story" (D. Agolli) but also for its histories, traditions and culture carried through generations, leaving us a very rich spiritual heritage distinct from other Albanian cities.

On July 15, 2005, at the meeting of UNESCO Committee held in Durban, South Africa, the Committee unanimously voted to declare Gjirokastra "World Cultural Heritage" at risk. Simultaneously this acceptance together with "the fortune" of Gjirokastra, that of being a national, regional and international tourist destination well defined the obligation to make tourism stakeholders preserve all this wealth, to show it to visitors, to carry it through generations in order to have economic benefits from it, in the best way possible.

Important cultural events

Some of the most prominent cultural events which not only entered the Local Events calendar, but also had a considerable impact on local tourism, are:

The **Leonardo Da Vinci** exhibition was an extraordinary event. It was held in "GjinZenevisi" art gallery in the Gjirokastra Castle in May 2010 with the support of the Lecce Municipality, the Cultural Foundation CreattivaMens, the Italian Consulate in Vlora, and the local institutions. It exhibited 40 machines modeled by Leonardo Da Vinci and wonderfully constructed by the artist Giuseppe Manisco. The event aroused a tremendous curiosity to the citizens, tourists, students and to different researchers. The Castle of Gjirokastra was thought as the most appropriate place not only in terms of the construction style but also because of the spirit of the city, the medieval inventions of the famous Leonardo, and the stories that were told, creating a magical atmosphere between the past and the present and thus promoting the Castle of Gjirokastra, in a very special and original way. During the exhibition 10,000 visitors mostly Albanians, visited the castle. This made the tourism market of that time have not only an important structural change, where Albanian visitors were added to its segments, but also have a significant increase in the total number of tourists visiting Gjirokastra. This tells us that cultural events which are well-organized, attractive and special in their type, are important instruments for attracting visitors, which means a number of important conclusions and economic impact.

The National Craft Fair which was first organized in 2007 by Gjirokastra Municipality and later by “Gjirokastra” Foundation with the support of the Municipality of Gjirokastra, various donors as well as a broad support from the local residents, is already part of the calendar of city events in Gjirokastra. The National Craft Fair and the National Folk Festival are the most important among other cultural events and heritage in the Southern region. All the activities that are organized for this occasion, ranging from the round tables, the concerts, the exhibitions, the auctions, the prizes given for "the best souvenir and the best craftsman", and the activation of the youth are all gathered for the same motif. Their main figure is the craftsmen and this turns it rather than a following activity, but gives a clear message that under the foundation of every undertaking, lies the human creative spirit, the rich spiritual heritage that his ancestors have left him, and all these embodied in artisanal product. This undertaking brings clear economic benefits. The fair conveys positive messages to the youth, in their creative activity in order to turn it into a creative undertaking and gain vital powers. It helps to develop marketing initiatives and the promotion of small craft enterprises, to introduce and sell new products and better quality only in a context of national level. It also assists to the meetings of the fans with the creators of the new models who come from across Albania, to attract potential buyers, for instance that part of the elite tourism such as institutions, museums, theaters etc. These may buy the most prominent craft products, to support and encourage other important activities of this kind, with impact on the local tourism market, the local economy, and to the participation of artisans from across the country.

The main goal of **events as “Trakufest” - Cultural Heritage Festival** is the recognition and promotion of the City of Gjirokastra, mainly among young people. This goal is realized through a large number of activities, extended in three days, offering to the young people and to the many visitors their preferred choices. The activities vary among academic conferences, traditional celebrations, organized tours to archaeological sites and numerous destinations outside the city, jumping from the air, concerts with popular groups of the region and many other parallel activities. The city, is enlivened as rarely, it should be noted that although Gjirokastra people are comfortably living their family life, the city stays awake until the early hours of the morning. Hotels, bars and restaurants, work at full capacity. Statistics also show that during these days, the city is visited by about 10,000 native visitors, most of whom want to know Gjirokastra, but also foreigners who although did not come to Gjirokastra for this, are a good way to promote the city to the places from where they come.

Gjirokastra ready for the golden opportunity

Many years ago, in 1968, the government of that time thought of giving life to a very important event, that of the National Folk Festival. Since then every five years it takes place at the famous stage of festivals in the castle of Gjirokastra. It is our biggest feast and the most representative of the traditions, but this year with a difference: it will not be held in October; but the magic world of a rich folk, traditions of our nation and the diversity of cultures within our territorial boundaries will be unveiled in May spring nights.

Preparations in Gjirokastra have been made at many levels: village, commune, municipality, and finally district. This is unlike the practice in the previous festivals, where specialists used to find folklore songs, dances, instruments and everyone worked on their selections free of competition. In the recent months, different groups competed with a total of 265 numbers, 350 folk artists were presented with 40 types of folk costumes (at district level), from which after a careful selection of experts, the best numbers were chosen for the Final Concert of Gjirokastra district. While it has been difficult to find original artistic material, the groups have done a good job in finding old authentic costumes. This problem was overcome thanks to good cooperation with the residents of Dropull, LunxhëriSelo, Sopik, Sotirë, and Labëria villages, etc., places where the spirit of preparations has started since early. It is worth mentioning that for the first time after several years of absence, the very special folk band of Zagori is participating in the Festival and is added to the mosaic folklore, completing in the best way the cultural coloration of the area.

All for one

The birth of an event with such dimensions as the Folk Festival of Gjirokastra is just like giving birth to a baby, and presupposes a long busy period of preparatory in two aspects:

1. The development of our cultural values, the preservation of folk essence and the diversity of cultures, which require titanic struggle and work, starting from the Ministry of Culture and going on with the academics, scholars, ethnographers and specialists, in order to highlight, the best our tradition;
2. In order not to leave such a case, the use of all this culture, new premises and approaches, for the needs of cultural tourism and to directly interpret it to incomes for the area.

The first step is to build the necessary infrastructure, or different in the language of the tourist market, the city's offer to cope with such a great change. Naturally, Gjirokastra, as the only stage of the Festival, has begun to prepare in its cultural fascination, more ancient and typical than any other

town of Albania, to bloom the most beautiful flower that of the tradition, the folk costumes, the tunes, the instruments, rituals of life and the Albanian weddings. The respective institutions as well as the foundations and cultural organizations have begun organizing and coordinating the work. Each of them with its own specific tasks and even youth Student Forum for the Protection of Heritage has expressed a desire to volunteer and help in the Festival work. Gjirokastra Municipality has prepared a detailed draft for the organizing of the Welcome Grand Concert and the Costumes' Parade's, where there will be displayed over 1500 of those. The municipality will make available the cultural institutions as the theatre "ZihniSako" and the Palace of Sport for emergency needs, not to mention the improvement of public transport that connect the city, the restored cobblestoned museum area, lighting, cleaning and greening. The civil emergencies will be put on full alert, while unofficially other local and central institutions, supported the idea of cultural exchanges with Yanina, the nearest border city with Greece, as an effective way of promoting our national culture.

What does the city offer?

Long before the talk of tourism concept in Gjirokastra, before it was declared a museum city and became part of world culture heritage of UNESCO, the city was a real pearl of folk architecture and irresistible for its beauty and originality. This because of its characteristic Bazaar, Castle, ancient bridges, the old Roman road, the cobbled lanes, the characteristic gardens, the churches, the mosques, the houses and the great cultural monument of water, but also because of a very rich spiritual culture, which in the profound process of socio-economic changes and cultural realities, clearly outlines our national identity.

This city's museums make it even more and this because special they still continue to play their role, here we can mention the Ethnographic Museum in Palorto, the Museum of Weapons, the Prison of "7 Penxhereve (windows in English)", the Gallery of "GjinZenebishi" where the newest museum opened the Museum "Gjirokastra". This museum will be easy to visit during festival days, being inside the castle of the city or close to it.

In Gjirokastra you can also visit:

- Sokaku i tëMarrëve and Kadare's house,
- The house of the famous diplomat Rauf Fico
- The houses of Zekate, Skëndulatëve, Babametove, Babaramove, Çabejveetc,
- The Big Bridges of Dunavat,
- Pazarin e Vjetër (The Old Bazaar), a neighborhood which was the first one to get out of the castle's walls, the Mitropoli and the Gate of Pasha Kauri,

- The Obelisk and the first Albanian school in Gjirokastra,
- The Characteristic Bazaar,
- The antinuclear tunnel of the Cold War, built underground, and opened recently for the public.

Over time we maybe did not appreciate enough our heritage and a part of it was lost. The city and the whole valley will try to offer the best possible to the visitors and the festival-goers.

Accommodation capacity in Gjirokastra

Gjirokastra has an accommodation capacity of 800 beds in the historical center. The preparations for the festival have also made the hotels along the national road Tepelenë-Gjirokastër and the ones in Dropull area and Libohovë to host 1,500 festival-goers, who along with the guests, visitors and tourists who will visit the city and the cultural attractions around it, are predicted to reach 10,000 during the Festival week. These figures do not only show an increase of 30% in the number of tourists in 2015 in comparison to the other years, but they also represent an excellent opportunity for promotion, because the visitors as an itinerant alive manual will bring emotions of the event to their countries. This event is a powerful cultural intertwining that comes from our distant and near past. "Çajupi" hotel as one of the largest hotels in the historic center will not only provide all its facilities, such as the conference rooms, the terrace where local instrumentalists and folk groups will play live music over dinner but it will also inaugurate an indoor craft shop for the wonderful products of "GjiroArt" cooperative. It will also serve the best traditional dishes of the city, but in this regard other hotels such as "Gjirokastra", "Kalemi 1" & "Kalemi 2", will not fall behind. These hotels will accommodate the guests of honor: the ambassadors of the authorities. The newest hotel is expected to be added to the tourist offer, where work is preceding rapidly. "Argjiro" in Çerçiz square will be one of the largest and luxurious hotels in the district. Its 40 rooms will be furnished after the tradition of Gjirokastra houses, but certainly with a new and contemporary style. "Odaja" restaurant opened recently on the Bazaar Pass, the road to the castle, will also offer quick and traditional dishes. "Kujtimi" restaurant offers traditional and modern cuisine, so do the bars & restaurants "Fantazia" and "Kodra", from where Gjirokastra is seen as it was on the palm of your hand. However, the tradition of house hospitality for guests of the Festival in Gjirokastra, which has been launched several years, will be successful even this time. As there will not be many rooms left in hotels, houses like Hashorva, Dede, Cari, Mezini, Gjinofeva, Dino, Babaramo, Relax, Papadhoppullo and the newest hostel "Babameto", will open their doors and clean accommodations for a minimum fee.

A tradition which should be preserved

Handcraft is considered as a tourism promoter in Gjirokastra, the steadily increasing especially after 2007, has been handicrafts. The Craft Centre, which sits in the “Babameto 2” restored building on the Craftsmen street accommodate Babameto 2, the "Craft Street" has already received orders for repairs on the damaged parts of the festival-goers costumes and filling them with the right accessories. Other crafts and souvenir businesses will be open all the time, and several new units of trade and services will be opened with the support of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, and the local institutions. During the Festival days, Babameto will hold the Craft Fair, which will offer tourist guides in the city, informative material, exhibitions etc. The artisans of the city, having studied the market changes year after year have adapted their products to the tourists’ demands and in order to precedewith the demands of the following event, this time they will put on them the words "Gjirokastra of Festivals". A good part of these craft products will be donated to the festival-goers; but very special will be the invitations which will be realized in the papyrus as well as many other fun surprises.

Not only festivals: Tours and guests

Gjirokastra as a cultural tourism destination is part of tours organized by various tourist agencies or individual tourists visiting it for a few hours while recently the tendency is to keep them for some nights. A group of Dutch researchers accommodated in “Çajupi” hotel will stay seven days to enjoy National Festival live. Other elite tourists organized by the local “Caravan Riding Centre Albania” agency will follow the medieval paths of caravans in Zagoria, will be able to know the history, the legends, the stories, the "crazy" characters of Zagoria, the churches, the chilling monasteries, and taste the delicious and famous teas of this area. Accommodation will be provided in adapted residents houses, travelling through the mountain trails from Paleokastra-Castle of St. Triadha- Çajupi Field – Zeji Rock –Koncka Gorges- the famous monastery of Nivan- the Selcka and Pogoni Gorge, and then go down to Suhë, and later in Gjirokastra. After the Festival they will go on the Ionian Coast, through an ancient Roman road, the famous Pass of Skërfica, where even Skerdilajd and his army went through, and then they will further proceed with their Albanian adventure. The beautiful Antigonea of King Pyrrhus, is only 14 km from the city and it is preparing to host tourists and reveal its values; at the stage of Adrian, the Roman emperor, for whose honor Adrianopoli was built. Tourists can improvise ancient poets; in Libohove they can visit the castle of Shanishasë Ali Pasha’s "grumpy" sister, the mansions of MufidBey, the monumental tombs, and the 600-year-old Plan tree. The Church of “Labova e Kryqit” is also famous and it is 10 km

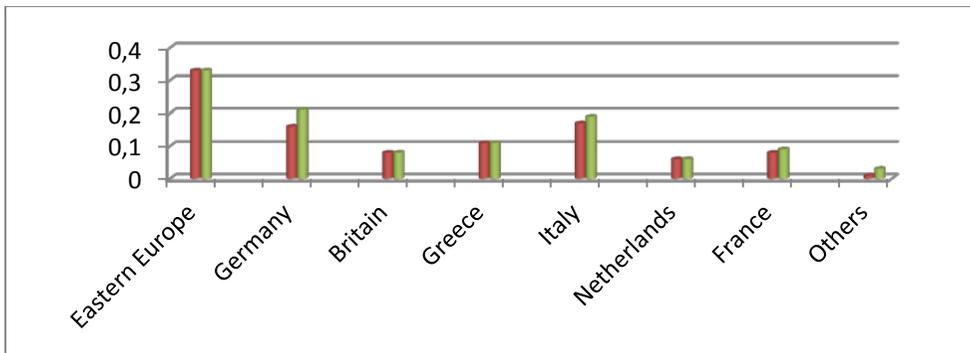
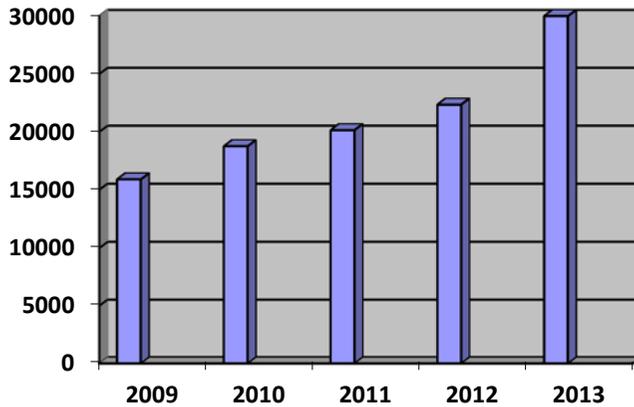
from the national road Sofratikë-Gjirokastra, with a dome and a cross-shaped central hall, built in the time of the Byzantine emperor Justinian around 527-565 years BC. Its real uniqueness, for which it has always been attracted by the culture treasure hunters, is that until recently it kept a part of the original cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified. Visitors can also visit the natural water source of Glina, the Bektashitekke of Melan. While in Lower or Upper Dropull Upper we suggest visits to the Church of Dhuvjan, the Ravena of Goranxi, have lunch in Terihat and Dervician; visit the Church of Hillomo, but especially the National Natural Park of Sotira etc.

The current market of tourism in Gjirokatra

"Statistics for community service" was a beautiful and beneficial project of students. It relied heavily on statistical data from the Tourist Information Office, in the Municipality. This survey was conducted in May-June 2013 and the project managed to interview private businesses, owners, tourists, and carry out general but significant observations for the current tourism market. At the same time, according to surveys conducted during the tourist season by the same office, in cooperation with volunteer students of Economy & Tourism branch, it was reinforced the conviction that the origin of the visitors, their profile, their behavior, and the money they spend in Gjirokastra change from year to year, depending on the particular economic situation and the fact that Albania, offers favorable prices compared to other countries in the region.

In 2009 the number of visitors was 15.894 and even highly organized. In 2010 the number of visitors goes to 18.756, while in 2011 until mid-September the number of visitors in Gjirokastra was 20.139 (see graph). In 2012 the tourist number goes to 22.354, so there is an increase of about 11%. In 2013 nearly 30000 tourists visited Gjirokastra and this increase is due to the fact that even native visitors went there because of the national activities, the Craft Fair, Traku Fest, etc.

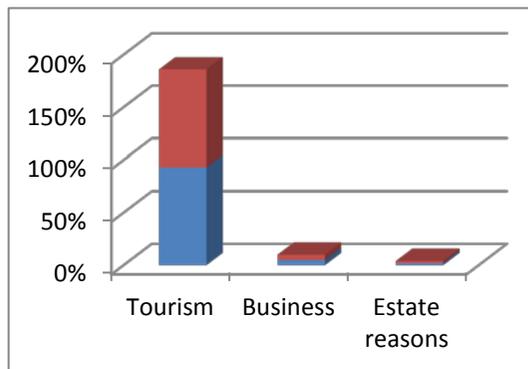
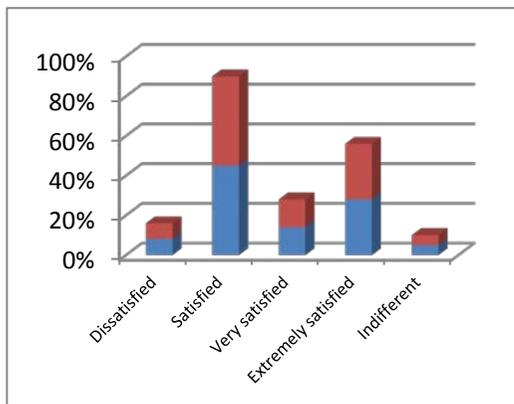
<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of visitors</i>
2009	15.894
2010	18.756
2011	20.139
2012	22.354
2013	30000



Country	%
<i>Eastern Europe:</i> <i>Bulgaria , Poland , Russia, Romania, etc</i>	33%
<i>Germany</i>	17 %
<i>Britain</i>	8%
<i>Greece</i>	14 %
<i>Italy</i>	13%
<i>Netherlands</i>	6%
<i>France</i>	9%
<i>Others: USA , Japan, Australia</i>	1%

Visiting reason	%
<i>Tourism</i>	93%
<i>Business-Trade</i>	5%
<i>Estate reasons</i>	2%

Satisfaction degree	%
<i>Dissatisfied</i>	8%
<i>Satisfied</i>	45%
<i>Very satisfied</i>	14%
<i>Extremely satisfied</i>	28%
<i>Indifferent</i>	5%



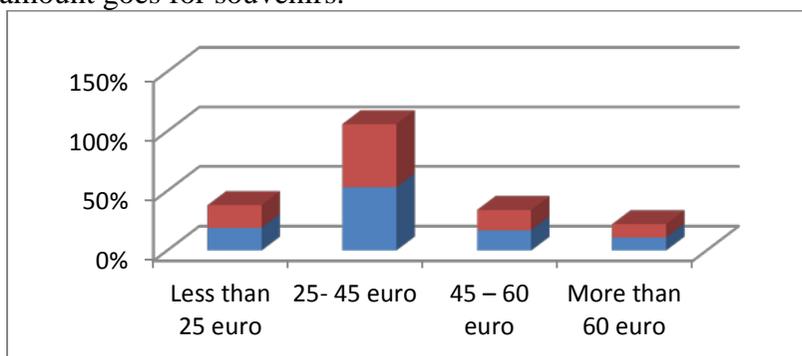
93 % of the total number of visitors visit Gjirokastra for pleasure or tourism, only 5% do business or trade, and 2% visit it for estate reasons.

- The city offers good opportunities for tourism and the satisfaction degree that the tourists receive is average; only 8% are dissatisfied, 45% are satisfied, 14% are very satisfied and 28% are extremely satisfied and 5% did not have any special feelings in comparison to other countries that they have visited. They were indifferent.

As for the income surveys we will refer to those of the last year. We have insignificant fluctuation, thus:

- The graph shows us that 61% of the tourists are willing to spend an average of 35-60 euro. Here we include the costs of the hotel and dining and only 12-13 % of this amount goes for souvenirs.

<i>The amount spent in euro</i>	<i>Visitors %</i>
<i>Less than 25 euro</i>	<i>19%</i>
<i>25- 45euro</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>45 – 60 euro</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>More than 60 euro</i>	<i>11%</i>



It is obvious that the economic benefit lies at the basis of all calculations, and it is the starting point for the detailed market analysis.

The graph shows us that 53 % of the tourists are willing to spend on average 35-60 euro, a figure which is not very high due to the economic

crisis. The increasing number of tourists causes the revenues of this sector to remain at satisfactory levels and increase from year to year.

Such detailed analyses are a good basis for calculating incomes of the tourism sector.

Increased tourism incomes will bring the overall increase of the revenues and allows us to meet the whole purpose of our job: improving community life in medium and long term.

Work continues

In order to be successful in tourism it is important to understand the will place that the cultural tourism will occupy in relation to the other types of tourism and the other economic branches of the local development. This in terms of new administrative-territorial changes, but the most important thing is the spirit of how we will present our cultural attractions, how we will preserve this entire precious heritage for ourselves and how we will later show it to visitors in order to maximize its economic and social impact. An article is not enough to talk about what actually Gjirokastra offers, this cultural treasure cradle. However, one thing is certain: the people of Gjirokastra will not only be hosts in this great popular celebration but they will also be spectators and tasters of the folklore, which will continue over generations. This folklore must respond to our inner needs to relive the past and to ease the weight of today's problems. In an effort to provide the best possible everything is open and nothing is fully completed, until the day the Festival begins.

Conclusion and recommendations

1-Cultural Tourism represents great business opportunity, if complete products and updates are provided to the right market segments (Page, 1995; Cave, Ryan and Panakera, 2003).

2-Successful cultural projects of tourism depend on cooperation, appraisal, marketing and service to visitors, as well as the development of successful strategies which connect culture and tourism in communities.

3-Cultural resources are various and different types of culture satisfy the different needs of different tourist groups. In order to reflect the diversity of sources and tourists, and create a competitive advantage in the tourism market it is necessary to make a range of marketing campaigns and this in addition to innovative and creative products (Hughes and Allen, 2005).

4-The cultural heritage assets, the local events based on culture, the originality and identity of a community can be used to increase the overall tourist offer, to reduce seasonality and attract new market segments.

5-The dynamic nature of cultural assets makes it possible to create new products which respond to changes and trends in the tourism demand

and facilitates the renovation of tourist destinations associated with the emergence of segments of the new market.

6-Successful events require a different strategy because of their specific role as tourist attractions, their focus on a geographic area, and because of the fact that they are regarded as cultural events in the country and not as tourist products. In this case, the authorities must deal with the promotion and the commercialization of these events in order to gain new markets or to be used as a retreat for traditional destinations tourists who like things such as the sun, sand, beach. They must also prevent the extinction of events potential tourist use.

7-The efficiency of cultural destinations can be measured through the connection among the available resources of culture and cultural tourism. In particular, we took cultural international tourism as the object of our analysis and it is consider as a wide sample of cultural resources which act as the main cultural attraction of the country.

8-Cultural tourism has the potential to produce a great market demand. There is a significant potential demand for cultural tourism in Gjirokastra.

9-These results might be considered as an important guide for the local authorities and the policy makers in the field of cultural heritage and cultural policy, and this in order to benefit as much as possible from the advantages of cultural tourism as a source of economic development.

10-Not all cultural visitors are cultural tourists and cultural motivation level is different. They are often looking for a mix of culture, entertainment and relaxation so not only traditional culture products. It is also clear that younger tourists are now much more important than they were before.

11-Summarizing the results of the study, it appears that cultural tourists today in Gjirokastra are generally well-educated people with higher status occupations and good incomes. All these elements fit the stereotype of cultural tourists.

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