

Rural tourism: Nurturing prosperity and community resilience

Amalia Tola^{1*}, Aldona Minga², Etleva Muca¹

¹Faculty of Economy and Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania; atola@ubt.edu.al (A.T.); evadashi@ubt.edu.al (E.M.).

²Faculty of Agriculture, Fan S. Noli University, Korce, Albania; aminga@unkorce.edu.al (A.M.).

Abstract: Rural tourism entails visiting rural regions for leisure, recreation and cultural immersion. It is valued for its potential to generate economic opportunities, preserve cultural heritage and conserve natural resources while empowering local communities. It offers potential for economic development by creating employment opportunities and generating income for rural residents through various tourism-related activities. This paper investigates the benefits to local communities of rural tourism development through a comprehensive review and insights from community stakeholders. The research was based on existing literature and employed a survey using a structured questionnaire and rigorous data analysis techniques. The survey included three well-known villages for their tourism experiences in the Korça region located in the southeastern part of Albania. The primary research targeted 200 members of the local communities aiming to analyze their perceptions of the benefits that rural tourism brings to their communities both in terms of income generation and socio-economic benefits. The study revealed that rural tourism has positively contributed to the economic development of these communities through revenue growth, the generation of employment and self-employment opportunities as well as the improvement of infrastructure through the lens of community perspectives. Rural tourism holds considerable promise for advancing sustainable development by offering economic, social and environmental benefits to rural regions. However, careful planning, community involvement and adherence to sustainable tourism principles are required.

Keywords: *Community perspectives, Cultural heritage, Economic development, Employment, Self-employment, Rural tourism, Sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

A wide range of services, activities and additional facilities are included in rural tourism to draw tourists to rural areas by giving them an authentic experience with rural culture, landscape and way of life [1]. Diverse forms have surfaced to accommodate the preferences of travellers and meet the requirements of residents as the idea of rural tourism has progressed over time. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), rural tourism is perceived as a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle, culture, angling and sightseeing [2].

According to UNWTO, rural tourism has a high potential to stimulate local economic growth and social change because of its complementarity with other economic activities, its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and job creation and its capacity to promote the dispersal of demand in time (fight seasonality) over a wider territory [2].

In recent years, the number of people choosing rural areas as tourist destinations has grown. According to Eurostat, a significant proportion of tourism-related experiences within the European Union occur in rural areas as people prefer to be closer to nature and combine tourism activities with sport, ecotourism, agritourism, culture and adventure. Approximately 43.8% of lodging for tourists took

place in rural areas as of 2021 compared to 33.8% in towns and suburban areas and 22.4% in urban areas. The allocation of tourist accommodation shares per these categories by European country is displayed in Figure 1 developed by the authors based on statistical data published by Eurostat [3].

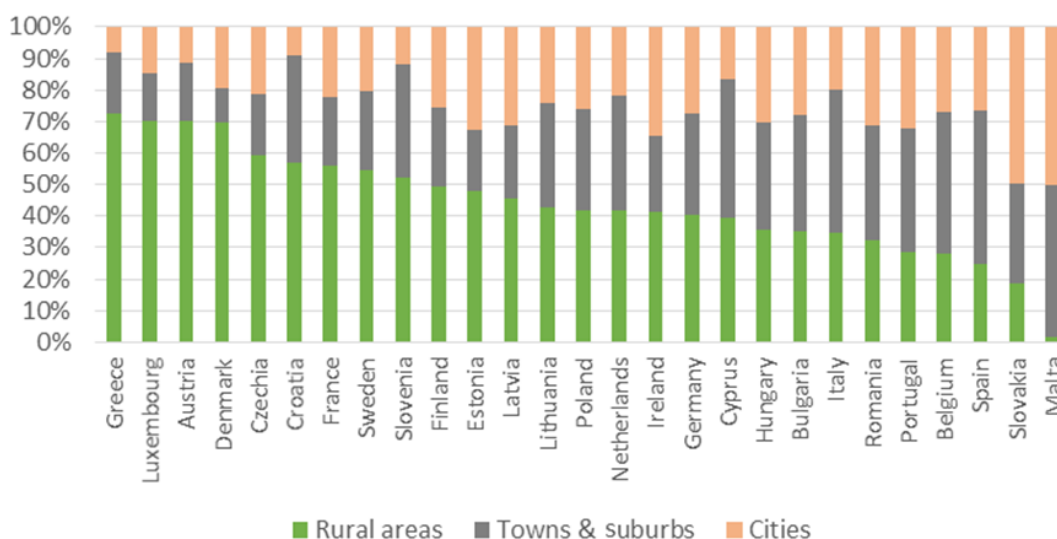


Figure 1.
Tourism distribution per EU country, 2021.

According to Figure 1, the countries with the highest rate of tourism in rural areas are Greece with 72%, Luxembourg, Austria and Denmark with 70% followed by Czech, Croatia, France, Sweden and Slovenia ranging from 59 to 52%.

According to the definition provided in the European Parliament briefing, rural tourism which has its origins in agritourism and farm stays is typically built on experiences that are specific to the countryside; it includes small-scale, physically connected activities with nature and involves a large number of small private businesses [4]. Several authors including Yang [5] and Ammirato, et al. [6] consider agritourism a potential means for economic development and regeneration of rural areas especially in territories with limited options for development. Tourism contributes to the sustainable livelihood of rural communities. It plays a significant role in the development of destinations particularly in rural areas [7]. Agritourism activities are increasingly seen as a diversification strategy for agricultural entrepreneurs as a form of support for the rural economy [6, 8] and the organizing of natural resources should be done in an ecological equilibrium to serve the principles of sustainable development through farming [9].

Most tourism literature focuses on rural tourism as an important element of the regional economy [7, 10] or environmental responsibility [7, 11]. Additionally, the development of tourism has other social and demographic implications [12]. According to Ibrahim, et al. [13], the portfolio of assets that people use to build their livelihood is the most complicated of the different components of a livelihood. It consists of both tangible assets and resources and intangible assets such as claims and access. There are five different types of assets owned by individuals to build their livelihoods which consist of natural, social, human, physical and financial assets.

Research on the impacts of tourism development in rural destinations has long been a focal area and has demonstrated positive and negative effects on the economy, social culture and environment [11, 14, 15].

The concept of rural tourism has changed over time, giving rise to a variety of variations that are appropriate for both the demands of local populations and the preferences of tourists. This article delves

into the advantages of rural tourism for the local community and examines how the community perceives the impact of these resources on their livelihoods.

According to Ktona, et al. [16], tourism in Albania is one of the potential pillars of economic development, offering real opportunities for GDP growth and employment. The tourism industry has recently been considered a priority sector for Albania due to its impact on sustained economic and social development. Tourism also leads to employment for the local community [17] especially for the younger generation as well as it can provide self-employment and generation of income. Several studies have shown that tourism directly stimulates opening of new jobs [17-21] and increases income for multiple segments of the local economy [20, 22] as the tourism sector stimulates the economic activity and income generation not only for tourism operators but also for a greater number of providers part of the tourism value chain. According to Tola [23], promoting and supporting rural sustainable tourism development can incentivize niche tourism activities and develop new destinations that generate employment in small businesses that provide accommodation, culinary services and local guides promoting youth and women. Literature has shown that the generation of new business models based on local products helped to create direct and indirect employment in small rural villages preventing the movement of young local people to urban areas or emigrating [24]. According to Fonseca and Ramos [25] and Cranmer, et al. [26], sustainable tourism is considered to strengthen socio-cultural identity, encourage infrastructure growth, commerce and entertainment as well as renovate traditional activities through value-added commercial channels for local products and services.

Minga, et al. [27] pointed out in their study that Albania has extraordinary tourism potential which creates a more recognizable identity improves competitiveness and improves Albania's position in the tourism market. Although the main tourism is oriented towards summer activities, there is a growing trend of local and foreign tourists preferring to visit the highlands, mountains and rural areas which offer a great wealth of natural, cultural and culinary attractions. Based on the tourism and hospitality report published by UNDP [28], the authors have compiled Table 1 which provides some key data for tourism in Albania in the past four years.

Table 1.
Data related to tourism in Albania.

Tourism related indicators	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of foreign tourists (Millions)	6.4	2.7	5.7	7.5
Total tourism contribution (Billion euros)	2.9	1.4	2.6	3.6
Estimated average contribution per tourist (Euro)	453	519	456	480
Total number of tourism employees (Thousands)	244	178.6	226	250
Total contribution to the GDP	20.3%	10.7%	17.4%	24.0%

In 2022, tourism has contributed 24% of the GDP showing growth compared to the year before the COVID-19 pandemic which strongly and negatively affected tourism worldwide. The number of foreign tourists has grown from 6.4 to 7.5 million from 2019 to 2022 while tourist spending grew from 2.9 to 3.6-billion euros accounting for an average spending per tourist in 2022 to 480 euros. Tourism has also contributed to the creation of jobs. Although the number of tourists has grown by 17% from 2009 to 2022, the employees' number in the sector has grown only by 2.5%. With low average costs and a high turnover of personnel, Albania's position in the international tourism market has grown substantially despite the legacy of the past which presents numerous difficulties in the sector such as seasonal tourism and struggle to maintain quality. Figure 2 illustrates the trend of foreign tourist numbers in Albania over the past 12 years based on statistical data provided by INSTAT Tourism Statistics [29].



Figure 2.
Number of foreign tourists in Albania and annual change (in %).

According to [Figure 2](#), the number of foreign tourists visiting Albania has grown from 2.4 million in 2010 up to 7.5 million in 2022. A great increase in the number of tourists is noticed from 2021 to 2022 with a 33% increase. Such growth in tourism can better support the economy of the country as tourism is a sector heavily based on human labour. Therefore, it can provide employment opportunities as well as income and development for all economic activities interrelated in its value chain such as farming, agriculture, the food industry, transport, communication, construction, handicrafts, the entertainment industry, etc.

The main challenge remains the radical improvement of the quality and maintenance of costs as well as expanding such an offer towards rural areas and throughout the year in the conditions of a growing sector in Albania. In recent times, rural tourism has surfaced as a promising pathway for economic progress in numerous communities around the world. Rural tourism holds the potential to support local economies, create employment opportunities and enhance infrastructure development beyond its recreational and cultural appeal. The influx of foreign tourists from other countries has an impact on the way tourism resources are used and provides opportunities for income generation which ultimately results in the strengthening of the tourism sector using the same principles that govern the tourism industry around the world.

However, understanding the nuanced dynamics of its economic impact requires insight from the very heart of these communities. Studies have emphasized the significance of rural tourism and agritourism in fostering economic growth within rural communities as a means of generating income and employment for local residents by leveraging abundant natural resources. Rural tourism development would be one of the mainstream strategies that would help to overcome some of the problems that Albania has been facing such as high rates of internal migration and emigration especially among the youth, depopulation of rural areas due to degradation of physical and social infrastructure and a lack of employment and income generation opportunities. Extensive internal migration towards the capital and major cities leads to an uneven distribution of population density along with economic, social and infrastructural challenges while also transferring unemployment from rural to urban areas [23]. Tola [30] emphasized in her study that “employment is considered a great contributor to economic growth. Creating access to the job market as well as the improvement of entrepreneurial environment are key interventions to increasing employment, people’s welfare and economic growth”. As tourism is considered a high potential economic sector in Albania, development of rural tourism would help to overcome some of the problems that rural communities face and therefore help to distribute wealth between urban and rural areas. Rural tourism can be easily developed with the active participation of local government and people [31]. George, et al. [32] pointed out that to understand

the potentials of rural tourism, it is important to understand the perceptions of the local communities in regards to the potential of rural tourism development and to determine the factors that motivate the local community to develop rural tourism.



Figure 3.
Korça region. location of the study area.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper aims to grasp the rural community's viewpoint regarding the advantages of tourism development in rural areas.

Research questions: This paper aims to explore the local community's perceptions of the economic benefits of rural tourism and whether tourism related factors affect their lives positively according to their perceptions. Therefore, the following two research questions were defined:

1. Has rural tourism development in the study area positively affected income generation for local communities?
2. Has tourism development improved the perceived socio-economic conditions of rural communities? Among the following factors, opportunities for income generation, positive employment prospects, preservation of nature and the environment and conservation of culture

and tradition which ones have the greatest impact? The research area is located in the south eastern region of Albania, in the Korça region whose geographical location is shown in Figure 3.

This region holds significant importance for Albania due to its abundant historical, cultural, natural, ecological, culinary and traditional assets. Several museums, religious monuments and traditional architectural wealth add value to the history and culture of the country. It is also home to several festivals which have already become a tradition and attract a great number of domestic and foreign tourists. The Korça region characterized by its diverse terrain encompassing lowlands, hills, mountains, and rivers, offers the potential to be a tourism destination throughout the year. It is situated at a distance of 181 kilometres from Tirana, the capital of Albania and right across the border with Greece located on the main route that connects Albania with the north-eastern part of Greece, a very well-known touristic area.

Three villages were selected for this research: Voskopojë, Dardhë and Boboshticë with their tourist attractions and experience with rural tourism. This paper investigates the significance of rural tourism development for social and economic progress in rural regions from the perspective of the local community. These three villages serve as an excellent foundation for the research due to their involvement in rural tourism initiatives.

2.1. A Brief Profile of the Villages

- Voskopoja was founded around the year 1330 and has a rich history of education, art, culture and economic development in the past. According to the World Monuments Fund [33], about 26 churches were built between 1630 and 1780 and it was home to a university and the first printing press in the region. Currently, only seven churches have survived. However, they remain in good conditions and are one of the most beautiful attractions in the village and surrounding areas. Voskopoja is rich with high hills and forests. The climate is cool during the summer and cold in winter with snowfall. During this season, people can ski on the natural slopes. The village is also well known for its clean air, health benefits and is considered a pearl of the Albanian landscape.
- Dardha is another touristic village, mountainous in landscape which offers an ideal climate, fresh air that makes it a favourable tourist attraction throughout the year. During the winter, it is explored for winter sports especially skiing along its natural tracks. It is often used as a health tourism location due to its fresh air and natural healing water springs.
- Boboshtica is an important tourist destination in Korça with a hilly-mountainous landscape. It is blessed with a wonderful nature, clean air and water, forests and medicinal plants. The rich terrain offers the possibility of a variety of recreational and sports activities such as walking, running, cycling, climbing, skiing, skydiving, etc. Its traditional architecture, culinary and handcrafts make it a beautiful attraction for tourists.

Research methodology: The study used a quantitative research methodology to investigate the economic advantages of rural tourism from the perspective of community residents. We used primary and secondary research to delve into this topic. The secondary data were collected through interviews with specialists from the Korça Municipality, Regional Agriculture Extension Agency and Tourism Information Offices as well as through a literature review.

Primary data were collected using questionnaires through which we sought to uncover the factors shaping individuals' views on rural tourism and its contribution to their economic welfare. A structured questionnaire was developed composed of multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended questions designed to capture information on various aspects of rural tourism, including spending behaviour, income generation, community development, and demographic characteristics. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small sample to assess clarity, relevance and comprehensibility before finalization and distribution.

The collected data were analysed using the statistical software SPSS. Inferential statistics, including binary logistic regression are used to investigate the association between independent and dependent variables and assess the factors influencing the perceptions of rural communities.

Sampling: Primary data were collected through questionnaires. The study adopted a convenience sampling approach to select participants from rural communities known for their tourism potential. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the representation of diverse groups from each community, including individuals not necessarily linked directly with tourism activities. The purpose was to have an analysis of the benefits of rural tourism development. A stratified random sampling of 200 respondents was used for the survey. The questionnaire respondents were members of the local community in the three villages.

The questionnaires were coded and processed using SPSS. We noticed that some questionnaires had errors or questions that were not answered during the entry of the data. The lack of data from the questionnaires reduces the statistical power and accuracy [34] to avoid these negative effects while considering the size of the sample. These questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. Therefore, 180 questionnaires were considered valid for performing the statistical analysis. For this article, we used a t-test and binary logistic regression that were employed to examine the relationship between the factors influencing the perceptions of rural communities and tourism related factors which affect their welfare. The basic model of logit estimation [35] is shown as follows:

$$P = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-a-bx}}$$

As this model is not linear in parameters, the ordinary least square method cannot be used directly, therefore the model must be linearized and brought to the appropriate form:

$$Li = \ln \frac{Pi}{1 - Pi} = a + bx + ei$$

In the generalized logistical model, each coefficient in a certain set of coefficients B_j shows the effect of the variable X on the probability of the individual choosing a certain category of the dependent variable, in relation to the alternative taken as a base. The statistical model was employed to depict the connection between a binary outcome variable and one or more independent variables, thereby estimating their influence on the probability of the outcome happening.

According to Tola [23] and Nulty [36], rural tourism can bring three main benefits:

Economic: Opportunities for job creation, opportunities to sustain existing businesses, benefits to local governments through taxes and rates.

Social: Support for local services, new facilities for the local community (museums, restaurants, etc.), cultural exchange, revitalization of traditions, customs and crafts.

Environmental: Preserving natural resources.

The independent variables for this study were selected from these categories.

3. Results and Discussion

We were able to understand more in detail the typology of tourism taking place in these three villages from the data collected through the questionnaires. The investment of the rural community in the past years in Voskopojë has been mainly focused on the establishment of guesthouses while in the villages of Dardhë and Boboshticë, the majority of community investments have been mainly in food and beverage facilities.

Most of the accommodation facilities are mainly small with up to 15 rooms operated by family structures. The majority of tourists coming to these villages are national tourists, visiting mainly in the summer and winter. However, the occupancy rates during the summer result in a lower rate of 65% during August. This is mainly because of the preferences of Albanians to organize seaside vacations during summer. The interviewees with tourist operators pointed out that the factors that guide tourists in their area are mainly quality of services, good infrastructure, social events and festivals and competitive prices to attract mainly young tourists. They consider competition on a price basis to attract visitors to their community. The tourists who stay overnight are mainly families with small

children or couples and groups of people at an age above 50. To attract the younger generation recreation activities, social events and festivals need to be organized in a more frequent and regular pattern. Employment as a complex challenge needs support and policies from the national and local governments. Most of the employees are young (mainly students) and consider their employment temporary and a source for generating some income especially during summer due to the seasonal nature of employment in this sector. Tourism needs to be supported to secure long term employment. Tourism has shown its positive effects in terms of investment growth and increasing numbers of tourists visiting these areas.

To understand whether the community directly related or not to tourism activities, perceives the benefits rural tourism brings to their community, two research questions were raised.

Research question 1: Has rural tourism development in the study area positively affected income generation for local communities?

In order to provide an answer to this question a “paired t-test” analysis was performed taking into consideration the responses of the interviewees regarding their level of income in 2019 (before the COVID-19 pandemic) and 2022. Two hypotheses were developed and verified for statistical hypothesis control procedures through the "paired t-test":

H_0 : Tourism development influence on revenues of the rural community is not significant ($x_1 = x_2$).

H_1 : Tourism development influence on revenues of the rural community is significant ($x_1 \neq x_2$).

The data were analysed through SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and the result of the paired t-test are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2.
Paired sample t-test results for the study

Results	Paired differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error means	95% confidence interval of the difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Annual revenues in 2019 and 2022.	1.787	3.177	0.280	1.231	2.342	6.363	127	0.000

The t-test results indicate a statistically significant difference in the average annual revenues before (2019) and after (2022) based on the results provided in [Table 2](#) with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and a p-value (0.000). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Consequently, it can be inferred that the advancement of rural tourism in the study area has notably influenced revenue expansion for the local community considering the years 2019 and 2022.

Research question 2: Has tourism development improved the perceived socio-economic conditions of rural communities? Which factors among opportunities for income generation, positive perspectives of employment, preservation of nature and environment, conservation of culture and tradition have a greater impact?

To analyse this research question, using data from the questionnaire, a binary logistic regression was used to analyse the influence of some factors that result from tourism development and how they influence community perceptions on the improvement of their social and economic welfare. Dependent and independent variables were defined.

Dependent variable:

Y: Improved economic conditions in the community due to tourism development.

Independent variables:

X₁: Income generation through employment or self-employment.

X₂: Infrastructure improvement.

X₃: Preservation of culture and tradition.

X₄: Conservation of the nature and the environment.

The analysis was performed through SPSS software and the results are presented in [Table 3](#).

Table 3.

Binary logistic regression model results for the study.

Variables in the equation	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Income through employment or self-employment	1.126	0.616	3.339	1	0.028	3.833
Infrastructure improvement	0.118	0.601	0.039	1	0.034	1.125
Preservation of culture and tradition	0.019	0.012	0	1	0.999	0.003
Conservation of nature and environment	-0.895	0.709	1.593	1	0.207	0.409
Constant	1.54	0.359	18.372	1	0	4.666

Based on the results, we obtain the following function:

$$Li = \ln \frac{Pi}{1 - Pi} = 1.54 + 1.126x_1 + 0.118x_2 + 0.019x_3 - 0.895x_4 + ei$$

In the case of logit models, the interpretation of probability ratios (log -odd) is of particular importance. The results provided in [Table 3](#) show the probability ratios with a 95% confidence interval. Thus, when a variable increases by one unit while holding other variables constant, the likelihood of that variable influencing the dependent variable will be altered by the Exp(B) coefficient. To have a significant result, we consider only those results showing a significant p-value (lower than 0.05). Therefore, the generation of income linked to employment or self-employment and infrastructure improvement results in a positive impact on the improved economic conditions of the community. The economic conditions improve by 3.83 times while for a unit increase in infrastructure improvement, the economic conditions increase by about 1.12 times for an increase of one unit in income generation.

Therefore, we can conclude that the enhancement of infrastructure and the creation of income-generating opportunities whether through employment or self-employment as part of rural tourism development have a positive impact on the economic well-being of the community. Local strategies and policies should focus on supporting the development of this sector which not only positively affects tourism operators but also the community which gains indirect advantages from the social and economic progress of the area. These results provide an important basis for understanding that rural tourism contributes to the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the community.

4. Conclusion

Rural tourism is widely acknowledged as a viable approach to achieve sustainable development. It has the potential to create economic opportunities, protect cultural heritage and preserve natural resources while empowering local communities. Rural tourism can revitalize local economies by stimulating demand for locally produced goods and services, thus supporting farmers, agribusinesses and local businesses and promoting employment opportunities. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for cultural exchange, fostering understanding and appreciation of rural lifestyles, traditions and heritage among visitors. Rural tourism needs support in terms of developing infrastructure, transportation networks, quality accommodation facilities, local guides, sports and recreation facilities, etc. despite its potential benefits. The seasonality of tourism demand and fluctuations in visitor numbers pose challenges for rural communities in maintaining year-round economic viability. Additionally, there are concerns regarding preserving local culture and environment as uncontrolled tourism development may lead to a loss of authenticity and environmental degradation. A holistic and participatory approach is essential to overcome the challenges associated with rural tourism development and maximize its benefits. Community involvement and empowerment are central to sustainable rural tourism development as residents possess valuable knowledge about their culture, environment, resources and are the driving mechanism especially for rural tourism development. Engaging communities in decision-

making processes, capacity-building initiatives and benefit-sharing mechanisms can enhance the socio-economic benefits of tourism while fostering a sense of ownership and pride.

Tourism shows significant potential as a catalyst for sustainable development, providing economic, social and environmental advantages to rural areas. Community involvement and adherence to sustainable tourism principles to achieve this potential require careful planning. Rural tourism can contribute to a more equitable and resilient tourism industry by adopting a holistic approach that integrates economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

Funding:

This study received no specific financial support.

Institutional Review Board Statement:

The Ethical Committee of the Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania has granted approval for this study (Ref. No. 1267).

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate and transparent account of the study that no vital features of the study have been omitted and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Competing Interests:

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions:

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Copyright:

© 2024 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

References

- [1] S. Miličević, M. Podovac, and M. Čavlin, "Resources for development of the Rača Municipality as a rural tourism destination," *Economics of Agriculture*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 751-765, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.5937/ekoPolj1503751M>
- [2] UN Tourism, "Rural tourism," Retrieved: <https://www.unwto.org/rural-tourism>. 2024.
- [3] Eurostat, "Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments by degree of urbanisation and coastal/non-coastal area and NUTS 2 regions," Retrieved: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TOUR_OCC_NIN2DC__custom_7018945/default/table?lang=en. 2024
- [4] European Parliament, "Rural tourism | Think tank |," Retrieved: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)751464](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2023)751464). 2024.
- [5] L. Yang, "Impacts and challenges in agritourism development in Yunnan, China," *Tourism Planning & Development*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 369-381, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2012.726257>
- [6] S. Ammirato, A. M. Felicetti, C. Raso, B. A. Pansera, and A. Violi, "Agritourism and sustainability: What we can learn from a systematic literature review," *Sustainability*, vol. 12, no. 22, pp. 1-18, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12229575>
- [7] E. Maziliauske, "Innovation for sustainability through co-creation by small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs): Socio-cultural sustainability benefits to rural destinations," *Tourism Management Perspectives*, vol. 50, p. 101201, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2023.101201>
- [8] M. Canovi and A. Lyon, "Family-centred motivations for agritourism diversification: The case of the langhe region, Italy," *Tourism Planning & Development*, vol. 16, pp. 1-20, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2019.1650104>
- [9] A. Tola, E. Kadiu, D. Kërçini, Z. Xhiholli, and A. Terpollari, "Tourism development potential, Diber region," *Albanian Journal of Agricultural Sciences (Special edition – Proceedings of ICOALS, 2018)*, 2018.
- [10] Y.-L. Liu, J.-T. Chiang, and P.-F. Ko, "The benefits of tourism for rural community development," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 1-12, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01610-4>

- [11] M. M. Su, G. Wall, Y. Wang, and M. Jin, "Livelihood sustainability in a rural tourism destination-Hetu Town, Anhui Province, China," *Tourism Management*, vol. 71, pp. 272-281, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.10.019>
- [12] I. Boboli and E. M. Dashi, "Exploring tourist expenditures of the Gjirokastra district in Albania: A cluster analysis," *Acta Scientiarum Polonorum Oeconomia*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 13-20, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.22630/ASPE.2021.20.2.11>
- [13] A. Z. Ibrahim, K. H. Hassan, and R. Kamaruddin, "The level of livelihood assets ownership among vulnerability group in East Coast of Malaysia," *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 157-157, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2018.v7n3p157>
- [14] I. Confente and D. Scarpi, "Achieving environmentally responsible behavior for tourists and residents: A norm activation theory perspective," *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 60, no. 6, pp. 1196-1212, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520938875>
- [15] M. L. Dai, D. X. Fan, R. Wang, Y. H. Ou, and X. L. Ma, "Does rural tourism revitalize the countryside? An exploration of the spatial reconstruction through the lens of cultural connotations of rurality," *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, vol. 29, p. 100801, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2023.100801>
- [16] A. Ktona, E. Muça, D. Çollaku, I. Shahini, and I. Boboli, "Support the creation of appropriate tourism offers by finding a model, using machine learning algorithms, to forecast spending by tourists," *International Journal of Technology Marketing*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 30-47, 2023. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/IJTMKT.2023.127333>
- [17] T. Var and Y. Kim, "Measurement and findings on the tourism impact," Unpublished Paper, College Station (TX, USA), Texas A&M University, Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, 1989.
- [18] A. Milman and A. Pizam, "Social impacts of tourism on central Florida," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 191-204, 1988. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(88\)90082-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(88)90082-5)
- [19] Z. U. Ahmed and F. B. Krohn, "Marketing India as a tourist destination in North America—challenges and opportunities," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 89-98, 1992. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319\(92\)90003-E](https://doi.org/10.1016/0278-4319(92)90003-E)
- [20] C. Tosun, "Host perceptions of impacts: A comparative tourism study," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 231-253, 2002. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(01\)00039-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(01)00039-1)
- [21] M. D. Petrović, I. Blešić, A. Vujko, and T. Gajić, "The role of agritourism's impact on the local community in a transitional society: A report from Serbia," *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 50, pp. 146-163, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.24193/tras.2017.0009>
- [22] R. J. Settina and B. O. Richmond, "US virgin islanders' perceptions of tourism," *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 30-31, 1978. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728757801700106>
- [23] A. Tola, "Rural tourism effects on youth employment, Kelemen-Erdos, A., Feher Polgar, P., & Popovics A. (eds.)," in *FIKUSZ 2021 Proceedings (pdf)*, Obuda University, Keleti Károly Faculty of Business and Management, 2021, Ed., 2021, vol. 252 pp. 92-107.
- [24] A. Minga and E. Muça, "Local development through social and territorial innovation: A case study of Puka Region," *European Academic Research*, vol. 10, pp. 3922-3930, 2023.
- [25] F. P. Fonseca and R. A. Ramos, "Heritage tourism in peripheral areas: Development strategies and constraints," *Tourism Geographies*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 467-493, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2011.610147>
- [26] E. E. Cranmer, M. tom Dieck, and T. Jung, "The role of augmented reality for sustainable development: Evidence from cultural heritage tourism," *Tourism Management Perspectives*, vol. 49, p. 101196, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2023.101196>
- [27] A. Minga, B. Zhuli, and D. Marku, "The impact of agro - tourism on poverty reduction and welfare in the region of Korça," *European Academic Research*, vol. 7, no. 10, 2020.
- [28] UNDP, "Tourism and hospitality in Albania," Retrieved: <https://www.undp.org/albania/publications/tourism-and-hospitality-albania-2022>. 2022.
- [29] INSTAT Tourism Statistics, "INSTAT tourism statistics," Retrieved: <https://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/industria-tregtia-dhe-sh%C3%ABrbimet/statistikat-e-turizmit>. 2024.
- [30] A. Tola, "Workforce development, a mechanism for stimulating economic growth in Albania," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 403-410, 2015. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n4p403>
- [31] S. Wilson, D. R. Fesenmaier, J. Fesenmaier, and J. C. Van Es, "Factors for success in rural tourism development," *Journal of Travel Research*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 132-138, 2001.
- [32] E. W. George, H. Mair, and D. G. Reid, *Rural tourism development localism and cultural change*. Toronto: Chanel View Publications. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845411015>, 2009.
- [33] Voskopojë Churches, "World monuments fund," Retrieved: <https://www.wmf.org/project/voskopoj%C3%AB-churches#:~:text=Twenty%2Dsix%20churches%20were%20built,the%20seventeenth%20and%20eighteenth%20centuries.2024>.
- [34] P. L. Roth and F. S. Switzer, "A Monte Carlo analysis of missing data techniques in an HRM setting," *Journal of Management*, vol. 21, pp. 1003-1023, 1995. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639802400605>
- [35] D. N. Gujarati, "Basic econometrics," 4th ed.: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2004, pp. 595-635.
- [36] P. M. Nulty, "Establishing the principles for sustainable rural tourism", Rural tourism in Europe: Experiences, development and perspectives, WTO," Retrieved: <https://www.institutobrasilrural.org.br/download/20120219145557.pdf>. 2024.