International tourism is a market/sector in constant development - larger cruise ships, higher hotels and tourists moving from one place to another. From season to season, new countries become popular and other countries fall from grace. Trends like culinary tourism and a staggering increase of use of social media, create a world where consumer and service provider are virtually on each other’s laps. Before understanding the situation, challenges and opportunities for development of the sector in Albania, it is important to develop a holistic understanding of international trends and the importance of the sustainable development of tourism.

**General, international observations**

Digital means and ubiquitous internet create a huge potential even for smaller destinations to attract new target groups. Travellers can easily share their experience and interaction on social media. In no-time they can be the ambassadors of a destination. They want to show the sense of place, the people they are with, where they are staying and the meal they are eating. Travellers want to enrich themselves with local experience such as cooking workshops, learning crafts, attending festivals and other activities showing them the ‘local’ way. Here is a huge potential for destinations like Qeparo to develop e.g. culinary tourism and to organize itself in a way that is independent of large tourism corporations.
Trends European Customer

- **Digital and internet:** the internet – make it visible and bookable – show special experiences with locals.

- **Travellers – ambassadors - sharing the experiences and interactions.** #braggie. A ‘braggie’ or ‘show off’ is similar to a ‘selfie’; the central part are elements around a person, while the selfie it is about the individual. A #braggie typically contains pictures of vacations that show sense of place: where you are, the people you’re with, where you are staying or the meal that you eat.

- **Sharing Economy:** through knowledge and exchange services with locals by doing activities together, small-scale networks where both parties benefit are created. It is aimed at peer2peer experiences and is similar to concepts that we know of like Airbnb.

- **Travel Enrichment:** travellers want to gain educational experiences that enrich them as individuals, such as attending ceremonies, participating in activities, experiencing ‘the local way’, or learning crafts.

- **What goes around, comes around:** sustainable tourism stems from the feeling that more and more travellers want to do something good for the country they are visiting. Does the money stay with the locals?

- **Local expertise:** travellers are looking for authentic and exceptional experiences traveling. Sustainable tourism can provide these experiences through unique learning experiences directly tied to a country’s people and culture.

Profile of the European Customer

Customers are looking for more authentic experiences and are more predisposed to sustainable tourism messages than ever. However there is only a small portion (5 - 10 %) of the European customer that actively seeks sustainable holidays on the basis of ‘sustainability wordings’. Yet there is a large group (60%) who would be inclined to buy the product when the ways in which the quality of experiences or products are increased are communicated. It is worth looking at engaging, inspiring, driving purchases, and creating loyalty with this target group.

5-10 %

“Ethical”
60 %
“Feel Good”

20 - 30 %
“Just want to switch off”
Why Invest in the Sustainability of Tourism Development?

**Preservation of Destination**
Happy, healthy destinations are essential for tourism. When a destination is not developed in a responsible way, taking into consideration the balance between visitors, industry, communities, and the environment, the destination will lose its original attractiveness after a short term of exploitative (easy) prosperity.

**Cost savings**
Utility and environmental costs are rising and predicted to grow further. Investments in sustainable practices can lead to cost savings on energy, water, and waste, and prevent harmful events such as flooding, landslides, fires, and diseases.

**Pressure from society (NGO’s, Unions, Government and consumer)**
There are numerous examples of societal ‘stir-ups’ when tourism has a negative impact on groups of people, areas, or whole countries. When tourism is developed in an unbalanced manner, the destination will lose its attractiveness and quality both for locals and visitors.

**Access to capital**
International donors, microcredit organisations, and regular banks have a growing demand for initiatives and projects to comply to sustainability preconditions. Banks provide...
better loans when the (tourism) business is sustainable and can show sustainability credentials.

**Improved service and better performance**
Many companies that have chosen a more sustainable approach (social and environmental) have proven that this has a positive effect on their level of service as well as the performance of the entrepreneurs and the staff. (Why Greener travel matters, TUI UK & Ireland, November 2010)

**Revenue growth**
Sustainable tourism is being increasingly linked to product differentiation and a better customer experience. It can lead to earlier booking curves, higher customer satisfaction, retention, and superior margins.

**Risk management and brand value**
By working together with other industry sectors, destinations, and stakeholders on tackling common sustainability issues the travel industry can mitigate risk and regulation before it becomes a case for compliance.

**Consumer trends and expectations**
Today’s customer expect travel companies to build sustainability in their product offer.

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### Goal and Objectives

The goal is to strengthen a destination like Qeparo by a multi-stakeholder approach to create a better place to live and to visit.

**Key objectives**

The key objectives that should be adopted by local stakeholders to ensure a true sustainable development of tourism and adjacent sectors.

1. Develop a destination management plan based on responsible tourism management, integrating views, roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders that enter into a destination partnership with stakeholders representing the Visitors, Industry, Communities, Environment (VICE).

2. To create policy and business environments which maximise engagement with sustainable tourism in Qeparo. (Develop planning requirements and laws related to planning, siting, design, construction, materials, renovation, demolition and impact assessment to protect natural heritage, cultural heritage, and local communal rights)

3. Develop and promote sustainable products and services that are compatible with their ecological, social, cultural and economic circumstances respecting VICE.

4. Introduce a capacity building, awareness & training, and improvement program regarding sustainable tourism that includes monitoring.

5. Make sustainability criteria part of quality management programs.

6. To develop a tourism sector-wide approach around best practices on water, energy, and waste efficiency.

7. Determine a joint (public sector/industry) destination marketing plan including quality visitors profile, length of stay, yields, local spending (based on the VICE).

In the appendix "I. Implementation Plan" you find a detailed oversight of the short term steps that can be taken to reach these objectives.
Aristi is a popular village in Zagoria, Greece. It is part of the Vikos-Aoos National Park. The resort is built at the upper part of Aristi, one of the most traditional villages in Greece. The resort is not just a hotel, but aims to be refuge for those seeking beauty in nature. Open all year round, it can be a starting point for hikers and anyone who wants to visit the Zagorochoria villages and a place for those wishing to experience nature while having top quality facilities available to them.

All buildings are built in a traditional manner and local architectural style. Wooden roofs and the walls built of local grey stone tiles blend in with the surrounding landscape and preserve the harmony of the area. The changing seasons endow Aristi with different colours and images.

Not only are local materials used, but sustainability in general is highly valued. The brochure also advertises that the operational needs of the buildings are both environmentally sustainable and have a very low impact on nature. To diminish the use of oil, heat pumps have been installed and LED bulbs are used for the lighting.

The Resort also provides the only spa in the region, with an indoor heated pool facing the surrounding mountains and villages, a jacuzzi, sauna room, Turkish steam bath (hamam) and massage services, offering moments of relaxation and revitalization. The staff of the resort consists of local people.
This is Artisti Mountain Resort & Villas, at the heart of the gorgeous and untamed region of Zagori in Greece.

Aristi’s promotion leaflet

Aristi’s promotion postcards
Mrizi I Zanave, Albania

Mrizi I Zanave is a perfect example of Agro-tourism in Albania. Its owner has gained insights and experience in Italy and translated it to the Albanian context. He works closely with different value chain partners in the surrounding area and shares knowledge with them on sustainable and ecological production and processing. As shown in Blog below, Albanians are appreciating this more and more. This is a strong indication for future success of agro-tourism initiatives throughout Albania.

Extract from Blog site on traveling in Albania:


“A restaurant with its farm, vineyard, and vegetable garden, its own olive plantation, delicious wine, lovely nature of the countryside with historic significance sets the ground for a unique experience for many visitors. I’m referring to Mrizi I Zanave in village Fishte of Zadrima commune. This place apart from the historic importance as the birthplace of Gjergj Fishta known as one of the most prominent figures of the Albanian literature and politics of 19th century with significant contribution to the Albanian cause, sets a fine example of a newborn social-economical tourism pattern in traditional Albanian gastronomy. Last weekend I visited Mrizi I Zanave for the first time and I was immediately impressed. The food was delicious, modern touch spicing up local tradition. Everything 100% BIO, 100% Albanian. Freshly picked vegetable from the garden cooked and served in ceramic plates from a nearby ceramic business, dairy products such as goat or cattle cheese processed by the restaurant staff, country ham preserved down in their basement, red Kallmet wine from the local vineyards, local fruit dessert, originate an authentic dining experience even for us locals. The owner of this place Altin Prenga, who’s passion goes beyond
the ambition of a young passionate Albanian cook, had a broader prospective of his investment. The core of his business is offering delicate taste of rural culinary in its natural habitat with absolute fair pricing, through promoting not only values of environment preservation, but also by enhancing the development of local economy in the region. I found this extremely useful as certain Agritourism initiatives are new in Albania. This modern form of intra-cooperation between local businesses in building sustainable Agritourism can sure lead to an increased interest in the quality of regional products, as well as awareness of replicating such business models in other parts of the country.

“There is no need to reserve a table in advance in most restaurants here, but not at Mrizi I Zanave. I called 2 days in advance to book a table for three in the weekend and I got one only after 3:30 pm. That’s what’s a pattern of successful investment with multiple positive trickle down effects in local economy. That’s a great example to follow. Made in Albania.”
Madeira - a hiker’s paradise... With its mountain footpaths and levadas (aqueducts), the island is perfect for walkers. By hiking people are introduced to the island’s natural history. About 100 years ago, farmers developed a footpath along the north coast, which was the only way for them to get their local products to a small hand-shaped harbor at Ponta de São Jorge (Ponta do Clérigo).

Hiking in Madeira, one can see famous forests and exotic plants, breathtaking views to São Jorge and other towns, experience Madeira’s oldest footpath to Curral da Rocha that goes along the cliffs, visit the lighthouse of São Jorge, and many other attractions, hidden spots, and secret viewpoints. Safely explore the highest peaks along the levadas through tunnels and on old coastal paths boasting magnificent sea views.

A relaxing swim after a hike is always an option in one of many beach and pool resorts with astonishing views over the local landscape. Madeira has been created by volcanic eruptions that have created rock formations as well as deep gorges. The natural pools of Porto Moniz are considered Humanity Natural World Heritage by UNESCO! This is one of the most beautiful Portuguese island and often reffered to as the Pearl of the Atlantic!

“Levada” is a Portuguese word that derives from “levar”, which means to carry and is very loosely interpreted...
as “carriageway”. A more correct translation would be mini-canal. The levadas were originally created in the 16th Century to bring water from the rainy northern part of the island to the sun soaked south where crops such as sugar, bananas and grapes grow. The original settlers chipped away at the cliffs and tunnelled through solid rock to make channels and tunnels all with a very slight slope so that the water meandered down towards its destination. To this day, the Levadeiro remains one of the oldest jobs on the island. These men are in charge of opening and shutting the gates which control the flow of the levadas. In total there are 2500 kms of levadas on the island and many were created even before the first roads! Today, these levadas provide travelers to Madeira with an extensive network of walking paths and scenic trails. Visitors can wander along the relaxing countryside or tackle the crumbling ledges known for inducing instant vertigo.

Levada walks are very popular in Madeira as the way is cleared by maintained paths running along the water making it a calming experience with a scenic background of nature at its most lush.


www.portugalnaturetrails.com/madeira-great-walks/4591563145
This report has been prepared in collaboration of CITYFÖRSTER, MVO Nederland and:

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