DELIVERABLE 2.1
PRELIMINARY REPORT
DRAFT CONCEPT OF THE TOURISTIC PACKAGES

by

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CEPF project: "Land of Eagles and Castles: Pilot Sustainable Tourism Model for the Albanian Adriatic Coastline"

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1   Objective

This preliminary report is prepared on the frame of the project "Land of Eagles and Castles: Pilot Sustainable Tourism Model for the Albanian Adriatic Coastline". The project is granted by the "Ecosystem Partnership Fund and Implemented" (CEPF) and implemented by the "Association for Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania" (PPNEA) in collaboration with project partner "Bulgarian Society for Protection of Birds" (BSPB). The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Development, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

The project duration is 36 months and the ending date is 30 July 2016. More information on the project is available on this link.

The aim of this report is to provide a draft concept for development of sustainable nature-friendly tourism products in each of the project KBAs: (1) Narta Lagoon, (2) Vlora Bay including Karaburun peninsula, Chika Mountain and Sazan Island, and (3) Butrinti.

2   General Approach

The management of tourism destinations and products is closely related with the policies and socio-economic conditions that affect local development and the creation of value in a destination. That is why a sustainable tourism development should try to obtain a balance between cultural values, environmental attractions and the economic results that the development of tourism can offer to a destination. Moreover, tourism development should also take into account three key issues: (1) to establish development guidelines, (2) to determine and control planning processes, and (3) to define the most adequate marketing strategies for the destination. The creation of value in a tourism destination canbe determined by the specialization through the creation of products targeted toward specific market segments. The creation of tourism products is a process that needs different elements and follows some steps. The initial step is where all basic elements are taken into account, afterwards the product is created and finally it is communicated to the market so that it can be consumed by a part of tourism demand.

Three main questions should be investigated during the process of sustainable tourism development in an area:

1. Which elements of the area are crucial for the development of tourism?
2. What can be done to enhance the value of the tourism destination?
3. What is the attitude of the local communities to develop their tourism destination and how they could be involved in the process?

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and correct balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

But during the process one also should take into account the three key areas of a tourism development for destinations at any level: local, regional, national or international. The key areas that should be present to achieve the established goals, all through the sustainable tourism development process of any destination, are the following (*see* **Figure 1**):

✓   Establishment of development guidelines

✓   Determine and control the planning process
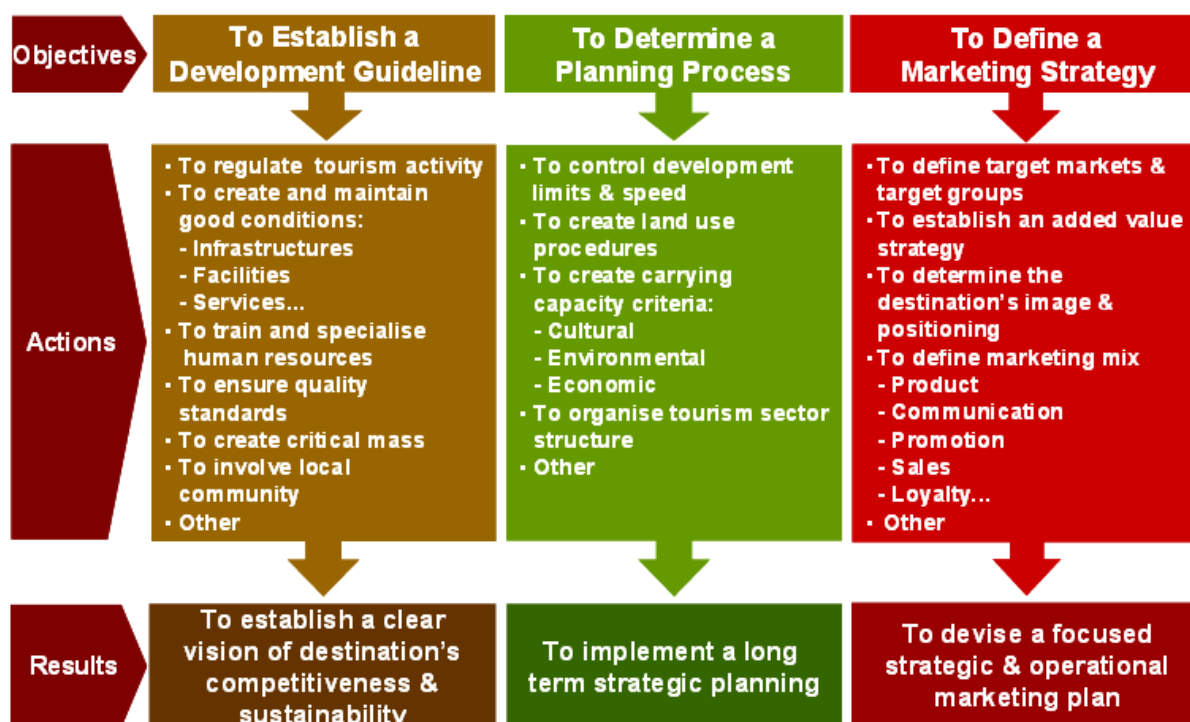
✓   Define a marketing strategy and actions

Figure 1. Scheme of tourism development process (Datzira-Masip 2006).

Development guidelines should help in the adequate development of a destination and at the same time should guarantee a clear vision of a rational and balanced development with the aim of the improvement of the competitiveness and sustainability of the destination.

Planning process is an essential tool that provides a framework that makes such development happen, together with the introduction of control mechanisms. Successful planning results in the implementation of development strategies that ensure both long and short term sustainability and balanced growth that shall guarantee the preservation of resources of a destination.

Marketing strategies are crucial for the promotion and commercialization of any destination that develops new tourism products that should be communicated to markets and target public. Both the establishment of specific marketing strategies and the application of the adequate marketing mix can help a destination increase the efficiency of marketing actions.

3   Tourism Product Planning and Development

3.1   TOURISM PRODUCT PORTFOLIO STRATEGY

A tourism destination needs a good product portfolio strategy to be able to develop tourism and specialise the existing supply of the destination. The portfolio should be based on the existing attractions and resources, but it should also take into account the essential infrastructures, facilities and services needed to make the development come true. During the process other criteria will be needed to help in the accurate evaluation of the real success potential of the different products. These criteria can be economic, social, cultural, environmental or political, among others. Some examples can be the market potential assigned to the product, the image creation and positioning of a destination, the attractiveness of public or private investment, the foreseen level of investment, the expected results, the social cost-effectiveness of the demonstration effect that can mean the creation of new products. Following this idea, the creation of a complementary supply can help in the definition of an adequate product portfolio for a destination. But, always bearing in mind a clear and coherent development strategy that will try to specialise the services, to be able to be differentiated from the competition, and taking into account the needs of the different actors present through the process of development and creation of new products.

3.2   TOURISM PRODUCT CREATION

3.2.1   Elements

Once the product portfolio is defined and the destination is specialized, it will be time to create products and services to complement the basic tourism supply of accommodation and restaurants. The creation of products follows a process that includes different elements (see **Figure 2**).
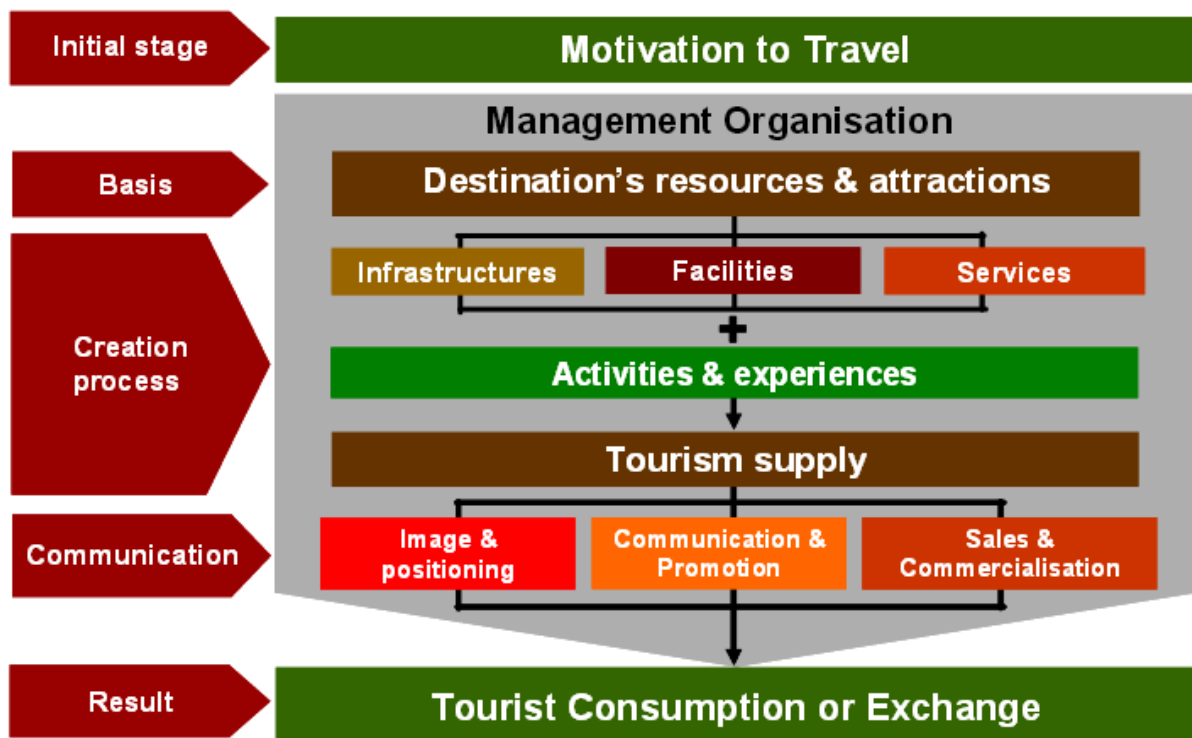

Figure 2. Scheme of the key elements in which the tourism product creation process is divided. (Datzira-Masip 2006).

3.2.2   *Areas*

There are 5 different areas and the result is the stimulation of tourist consumption in a destination:

1. **Initial stage**: existence of a motivation to travel.

2. **Basis**: resources and attractions are the basis of a destination.

3. **Creation process**: it requires not only the existence or creation of infrastructures, facilities and services but also the development of specific activities or experiences. The result of the process can be seen as the tourism supply of a destination.

4. **Communication**: once tourism supply is created, there will be functional and emotional benefits that can be communicated to markets and target audiences through the creation of an image and the correct positioning. The values provided by the product should also be communicated and promoted to stimulate consumption.

5. **Result**: the consumption of tourism products in a destination. The process to create products is complex and it requires the existence of a management organization that should lead, coordinate, structure, develop and implement the process. It will also be necessary that all the different issues related to the process of product creation are coordinated to be able to guarantee its success, always taking into account the economic perspective, social development and protection of the environment.

3.2.3   *Key points*

Tourism product development is a complex intertwined process that involves research, information, planning, training and implementation, bringing all of these together. The planning and organizing of tourism products involves:

✓ Knowing what you have as a starting point and being able to identify what may be missing

✓ Securing community understanding and engagement to be inclusive in planning and impact

✓ Learning about tourist/visitor interests, behavior and needs to better serve and inform

✓ Developing a comprehensive approach to planning, developing, training and stewardship, guiding development and maintenance

✓ Collaborating across multiple sites and communities for larger impact to build destination and to conduct joint marketing

✓ Identifying what success will look like and developing methods and measures to assess your success and continually improve visitors' tourism experience

Products in tourism are the places and experiences that are identified, created, and marketed to visitors. Accompanying services and support systems are another element critical to implementing the vision and planning for attracting visitors. This includes product development, marketing, becoming a hospitable and welcoming community, and developing and sustaining the resources and capacities needed to keep the efforts going and successful.

Tourism is a team effort. For visitors to have a rewarding experience in the local communities, many organizations and efforts are needed (working in concert) to deliver products and services. Some organizations know they are directly involved in tourism, but others don't. As communities develop

heritage tourism resources and determine ways to attract visitors, all of these organizations may be called upon to contribute in their unique ways.

To understand the tourism product and product development it is important to consider who is on the team and what their contributions will be. Understanding what attracts visitors to the targeted destination is an important step in building a tourism plan. "Attractions" are the gravitational core of the tourist destination - they "pull" visitors to the destination by creating a reason to travel.

The process includes the following steps:

✓ Starts with the consumer

✓ Explores the importance of attractions

✓ Examines products and services and the consumer experience

✓ Considers destination planning requirements for successful product development

3.2.4   *Consumer's orientation*

In tourism, failing to understand the consumer and see the destination from their perspective creates two major problems:

1. The first problem is that many destinations don't see the unique tourism experience they have to offer. Many examples of this problem manifest themselves in heritage tourism. For instance, residents in some rural areas cannot see how special their destination is because it is so familiar. It is hard to look at what is around you as if you had never seen it before. Planning requires looking at the product through someone else's eyes!

2. The flip side of the same coin and the second problem is when tourism managers are so focused on the product that they forget the consumer. This is common with folks associated with new facilities. They focus on every attribute of the building or operation and forget to consider what really creates value for the consumer.

The challenge for the tourism product developer is to be completely aware of the many product options available within the destination area. With this knowledge, sites and experiences can be organized and presented to the visitor in a way that creates value for the consumer and maximizes benefits for the destination.

3.2.5   *Nature of Tourism Attractions and Products*

To understand the product options, it is worthwhile to consider the nature of tourism attractions and products. Attractions can take many forms. They can be a single product such as Disneyland or a series of products loosely "tied" together. For example, new trails, opening across the region, are great examples of products coming together to attract visitors. Attractions can be commercial or cultural or natural (or all three). They can be "hard", such as historic sites – or "soft", such as listening to a particular type of music or learning an almost forgotten craft. They can be deliberate – such as a purpose built monument or incidental – the architecture of a downtown that brings back memories of a simpler time, or is built from area field stones and is still functional; these reflect the uniqueness of the target area.

Not all attractions are created equal. Attractions have different amounts of "pull."Some will attract people from across the state; others will attract people from across the world. And not every attraction has universal appeal. Knowing about and understanding who is attracted and why they are important will drive the marketing efforts. The attraction may have special appeal to a certain audience that will travel across the world to see it and general appeal to everyday folks who may include it in their weekend drive. As tourism planners, understanding the appeal or "pull" of any attraction will be extremely useful in developing marketing.

3.2.6   *Products, Experiences and Services*

Tourism involves a variety of organizations and facilities (museums, theme parks, festivals, individual sites), but tourists and visitors are really buying services and experiences. Consider the variety of options available to product developers. Tourism attractions can be permanent "bricks and mortar" that people visit all year round; they can be seasonal; and they can be temporary, such as festivals that run for a weekend or a week.

This is just the beginning of our exploration of tourism products, services and experiences. Even at a permanent facility, products can deliver services and experiences in many ways. Let's use a museum or historical site as an examples. They may present collections in a special way for a short period of time, rearranging materials to tell different stories that may appeal to new visitors or attract repeat visitors. There may be special activities that cater to a different group of visitors than would normally visit during the day. The museum may mount seasonal exhibits and add or subtract activities to fit the time of year.

Add into the mix the product variation and the opportunities for creative product development grow exponentially. At the most basic level, training in customer service can create a competitive advantage.

Remembering that good customer service doesn't just happen (that it needs to be managed and supported) is often step one in creating great product experiences. But people can add so much more to the consumer experience: the docents in our example are passionate about their topic and knowledgable and enthusiastically share this with visitors. They may be volunteers, not even be on the payroll, but visitors may remember the conversation long after they forget the exhibits. Combine people and programming and new product options emerge. Tourism is a service industry, and product developers must remember that their people are the most important part of the tourism product. Another element can also be considered in creating tourism experiences–the consumers themselves. *Co-creating tourism experiences takes place when the visitor becomes an active player in the creation of the memory.*

3.2.7   *Packaging and Clustering*

Packaging combines complementary products and clustering combines similar products. Both add value to the visitor and the community. Packaging is combining products in a way that creates value for customers and increases their likelihood to buy or visit. If for instance one can package the entrance price for a museum with a guided tour, and spinning class, this may create not just one, but three reasons to visit all at a "value" cost.

There should be a vision from a single product to a more complex tourism experience. For instance, the visitors when come to town, could be provided with a meal at a nice little downtown and then visit the target site. A longer visit might include a bed and breakfast, dinner-out night and a walk through the nature reserve. This might also include a little shopping and antiquing. Each of these activities combines to create the consumer's destination experience.

Offering a weekend escape – with two days site-seeing, eco-tourism (birdwatching etc.), accommodation in nice guesthouses, subsistence in traditional restaurants is a common travel package. This package offers the consumer an easy way to understand an easy to buy weekend experience and significantly increases the value to the visitor and to the community. From a product supplier's perspective, packages like this include a commitment by the partners and single point of purchase where the consumer can buyall the elements in one easy step.

Individual products may have limited "attraction", so combining similar products can be a useful technique to enhance the appeal of the destination. A destination that is known for its arts and crafts stores is a good example of clustering. From a product developer's viewpoint, clustering can be achieved in a number of ways. Sometimes it is just a matter of presenting several products that previously haven't been presented together, in other cases "trails" and "routes" cluster products (wineries, historic sites) that are geographically spread out.

3.2.8   *Conclusions*

✓   The tourism development policy should be based on sustainable criteria that should stand on three key areas: development, planning and marketing. It should also take into account the limits and speed, priorities, etc, of the development and management of tourism.

✓   The management of a tourism destination goes hand in hand with tourism policy and a clear and specific vision of the development, planning and marketing issues that should be applied.

✓   The management of a destination needs an organization that leads, coordinates and directs the different agents involved (both public and private) in the development of tourism.

✓   The product portfolio strategy can facilitate the specialization of the tourism supply of a destination, and the development strategy to be followed should also be defined.

✓   The creation of products has to be oriented toward specific markets and specific targets, to be able to offer the adequate products to fulfil their needs and expectations and, therefore promote the creation of value within a tourism destination.

4   Basic concept for touristic products at the project KBAs

The touristic products at the project KBAs should be planned, developed and implemented based on previous detailed investigation on the nature and cultural values of the target areas (preliminary reports on each of the project KBAs) and attitude of the local stakeholders (sociological study implemented under the project), as well as based on an action plan.

The available elements around which the products in the three KBAs should be build are:

- **Nature and wildlife**
    - Organized visits of protected areas
    - Wildlife-watching itineraries and observation sites
    - Camping in wild areas
    - Picnic areas
    - Information centres

- **Culture and heritage**
    - Archaeological and historical sites
    - Museums and information centres
    - Events (traditional festivals, concerts, folklore)
    - Gastronomy

- **Sports**
    - Fishing
    - Tracking and mountain biking
    - Boating, canoeing and rafting
    - Climbing
    - Paragliding
    - Horse riding

- **Special interests**
    - Mushroom, wild berries and herbs piquing
    - Speleology
    - Photography
    - Transhumanism
    - Specializations and stages for students

- **Events**
    - Organizing national or international events

- **Rural tourism**
    - Rural activities
    - Accommodation in rural houses, farms

For each of project KBA, specific package with touristic products will be developed:

- The Mysterious Forest (touristic product for Karaburun)

- The Land of Castles and Eagles (touristic product for Butrinti)

- The Bird Lagoon (touristic product for Narta)

NB: The final concept for development of the touristic products will be made after finalizing the sociological study under the project.

References:

Datzira-Masip, J. 2006. Cultural Heritage Tourism-Opportunities for product development: the Barcelona case. Tourism Review, Vol 61, No 1, AIEST

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