Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Exploration of marketing tools for the promotion of protected areas (Albania)

Kekezi, Ana

European University of Tirana

2019

Online at https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/117096/
MPRA Paper No. 117096, posted 19 Feb 2026 11:40 UTC

Exploration of marketing tools for the promotion of protected areas (Albania)

Ana KEKEZI
PhD candidate, European University of Tirana
ana.kekezi@gmail.com

Abstract

Promotion and marketing are identi ed as main pillars to tourism sector in Albanian Government strategy 2017 - 2021. Protected Areas as a tourism destination is a new notion to Albanian citizens and stakeholders given isolation of these areas during communism regime and the decade after. is study will aim to bring light on how new tools of marketing may in uence and impacts the promotion of PAs in Albania as tourism destinations and how stakeholders are engaged, accept and perceive these new marketing and communication approaches and the use of modern and digital promoting tactics. is study responses the call of researchers for further studies in developing countries for a deeper exploration in tourism industry

Key words: destinations, promotion, marketing, stakeholders, tourism, Albania

Introduction

At a glance

"Albania is truly blessed with spectacular natural and cultural heritage, the backbone of its tourism sector, a sector which has shown impressive growth over recent years,"
UNWTO[1] Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, December 2014

Worldwide recently seems to have a reallocation of media investments away from TV, radio, print or OOH in online media. Nowadays in Albania, as per the ndings of studies done by researchers and business companies, the media outlets that are internet based are considered with important role on promoting the products and services, but also other forms of communication. e internet market of ad spend in country has rapidly increased from 0.8 million euro in 2013 to 2.4 milion euro in 2017 (Monitor.al 2018)[2] even though the online market is identi ed as di cult to correctly report due to the high informality. e tools of new media in country are rapidly embraced even from central and local government, public sector and their high ranking representatives. Articles suggest that in tourism industry worldwide the digital communication and marketing are leading this industry and on the recent year tourism in Albania is facing a boom in its growth. e statistics show an immense growth of the sector o ering important contribution to the economy.

e National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Republic of Albania report that 5.1 million foreign visitors visited our country in 2017, + 8.1 % more tourists than the previous year (2016) and WTTC (2018) reports that the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 26.2% of GDP in 2017, and is forecasted to reach 28.9% of GDP by 2028. But stakeholders suggest that tourism is not a sector in a secure path yet, considering many present threats and showing the incapability of the Albanian government to rely on a steady mid-term or long-term strategy.

e tourism law in country has been going through many changes during the period of post-communism. e actual Tourism Law, set on Article 1 the main scope of the law "the promotion of Albania, as a touristic destination for foreigner and domestic visitors, relying on the development of a sustainable tourism".[3]

---

[1] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), UN agency

[2] http://www.monitor.al/tregu-reklamave-fut-median-ne-krize-televizionet-pa- time-online-mund-print/

[3] Tourism Law, Republic of Albania [accessed February 2018] http://www.qbz.gov.al/Ligje.pdf/turizem/Ligj_93-2015_,27072015_%20perditesuar_%202017.pdf

Mapping the tourism in the Albanian Economy

"Located in the Mediterranean region, Albania could well be Europe's last tourism secret." Export.gov 2017[4]

European Commission (June 2017) reports that Albania is experiencing a gradual economic upturn that is expected to continue in 2017-2019. Since 2014, Albania's economy has steadily improved and economic growth reached 3.8% in 2017[5]. e trade balance improved thanks to the good performance of tourism,. In economic development for 2016 the World Bank reports that Albania's economy expanded 3.4% in 2016, supported by robust domestic demand. Net exports contributed 2.1 % points, driven by tourism services exports[6] that expanded signi cantly in 2016 from a relatively low base and is expected to continue performing well.

e tourism is one of the key contributors on the Albanian economy in several directions as growth of GDP, new work places, exports and investments and relative contributor on other sectors. World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) forecasts that Albania in a decade (2018 – 2028) can be able to turn tourism as the main contributor of the GDP.

WTTC (2018) reports the data of Travel and Tourism contribution for 2017. e direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 8.5% of total, and is forecast 9.3% by 2028. In 2017 Travel & Tourism directly supported 93,500 jobs (7.7% of total employment) and is expected to 111,000 jobs (8.8% of total employment) in 2028. While total contribution 24.1% of total employment (291,500 jobs). is is expected to rise to 344,000 jobs in 2028 (27.3% of total). Visitor exports generated 54.2% of total exports in 2017 and is expected to go in 2028, 62.2% of total. Travel & Tourism investment in 2017 was 7.5% of total investment and forecasts to go in 2028, 8.2% of total.

Cvetkoska & Barišić (2017) ndings show that the most e cient country in the period of six years (from 2010 to 2015) was Albania among all countries of Balkans studied in their research.

e government have been "aggressive" during recent years in promoting tourism regionally and internationally, and the statistics show that this strategy has o ered a good result.

Risks and Challenges

Yet tourism strategy path in country seems to be unclear and unsafe. "From 1990 up to date many strategies proposed by international donors have been refused or

[4] https://www.export.gov/article?id=Albania-Travel-and-Tourism

[5] e World Fact Book – CIA [accessed March 2018]

[6] World Bank "Albania-Snapshot-Fall2017" http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/805501507748388634/Albania-Snapshot-Fall2017.pdf

not approved, and the ones that have been considered were partially implemented due to lack of capacities, expertise or willing" said a representative o cer of one of the biggest international donors in country for tourism sector.

She emphasized that the shifts government does from a strategy to a new one, costs money and extent lack of trust among stakeholders. A high ranking representative in the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MTE) recognize the situation and claim that due to the new tourism law entered in force December 2017, a new strategy is need.

IMF (2017) reports that though Albania has bene tted from the recent tourism boom in the region, the outlook for exports remains challenging. On the other hand, European Commission (EC) reports that the services sector development contributes 70% of the gross value added. EC emphasizes tourism sector in particular is identi ed with signi cant development potential, but is impeded by a number of challenges linked to the lack of skills of tourism professionals, low accessibility of tourism services, the absence of a sustainable natural and cultural o er, etc. e measure to standardize the tourism sector, if implemented successfully, could be a driving factor for competitiveness.

e bank industry in country see a high perspective on the sector. 'Tourism has high potential, but and a masterplan for the development of the tourism would give access to a structured development' suggests Blanc, Frederic (2017)[7]. EU Delegation in Albania (2018) also seek a Master Plan for sustainable tourism in country. EU Ambassador in Albania Romana Vlahutin, underlined that "a national Tourism Master Plan is a must".[8]

" e government have no o cial strategy for tourism yet. is means lack a clear vision for the sustainable development of sector. ere can't be marketing and promotion, if there is no strategy" said Rajmonda Lajthia, Executive Diretor of ATOA[9]

Domestic Tourism

At the heart of tourism is the excitement of new cultural experiences [10]

e statistics from the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) report that 5.1 million foreign visitors visited our country in 2017, + 8.1 % more tourists than the previous year (2016). Monitor.al (2018) reports that the boom of 2017 from foreigner visitors and tourist may not be stable and on the other hand WTTC (2017) has de ned Albania as a high risk country, as it has a poor infrastructure

[7] Blanc, Frederic, CEO, Societe Generale Albania Bank, Interview for Monitor.al Magazine

[8] Round table "Support to Tourism companies in Albania, organizer European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

[9] Rajmonda Lajthia, Executive Director, Albanian Tour Operator Association (ATOA), Interview with Ana Kekezi, March 2018, Tirana

[10] eunissen, P., Mersham, G., & Rahman, K. (2010). Chapter 5: e New Media, Cultural Transformation,

network in quality and quantity, a threat for the development and sustainability of tourism.

On MTE's Draft Strategy of Tourism 2018 – 2022 is identi ed that aiming a sustainable development in this sector leads the strategy. ough a clear direction for domestic tourism was not identi ed.

WTTC (2018) reports that domestic travel spending generated 24.6% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2017 compared with 75.4% for visitor exports. On the other hand, Bank of Albania (2018) reports that 1.3 billion euro have been the spending of Albanians outside country, +11% increase comparing year 2016. INSTAT (Institute of Statistics, Republic of Albania), reports that 5.18 million Albanian citizens have traveled outside country, +12% comparing 2016. Figure 1 identi es a low interest of domestic visitors in cultural attractions.

FIGURE 1: Visitors in cultural attractions 2014- November 2017

Figure 1: Visitors in cultural attractions 2014- November 2017					
Visitors	2014	2015	2016	Nov. 2017	2017 vs 2014
Domestic	198,536	148,669	185878	202557	2%
Foreigners	156,446	238,187	282157	349390	123%
Total	354,982	386,856	468035	551947	55%

Source: Ministry of Culture, Republic of Albania, Jan 2018

e Albania Tour Operators &Travel Agencies Association (ATOA) reports that given the non-secure path the Albanian tourism is having on attracting the foreigner visitors, a proper mid-term strategy is urgent need, to attract Albanian citizens to domestic tourism. ey claim that the Bank of Albania reports should be taken in consideration and proper evaluation is need, to understand how much money can stay in-home[11].

ATOA concerns are connected mainly to a low seasonality of Albanian tourism, even though a high touristic potential for 365 days tourism and the potential of niche segments, to encourage and attract domestic visitors. RisiAlbania (2014 p. 4) has identi ed why Albania agonizes from a short seasonality. In their nding country su ers from a numerous limitations such as poor or absence of infrastructure, absence of information for market, poor customer service, and absence of the set standards, poor marketing and a touristic product that often does not meet the expectations of the customers. ere is no survey on domestic tourism and e orts are needed to improve the business register (EU, 2016)[12]. GIZ (2016) reports that 98% of tourists who have been interviewed; have responded positively to the expectations of

[11] Scan TV ,Studio Interview with Kliton Gërxhani, Chairman ATOA (March 2018)

[12] European Commission, Albania 2016 Report

accommodation in Albanian Alps, but in their research is not de ned either them are foreign or domestic tourists. While on the survey done for this study 64% of the respondents of Q1 answered that accommodation quality vs price is the main reason, they do not prefer to choose domestic tourism. On the Q2 survey participants on this research, 16 out of 16 responded that focus on domestic tourism should be immediate from the government and public sector and 11 out of 16 responded that government has worked far better with the promotion on foreign tourist's target. Leonard Maci said that domestic tourism will be on National Agency of Tourism (NAT) focus, but he acknowledged that yet NAT have not worked with a proper strategy or plan on this direction. He claimed that the e orts and tools of NAT during (2013 – 2017) have been focused to reach the market beyond borders, as a good economic potential.

Internet fast penetration

During the last decade Albania has witnessed an outstanding level of access to internet. Albanian Institute of Media (AIM, 2015) identi es that the real growth of internet in Albania started after the privatization of ALBtelecom Company in 2007. e Albanian Government vision on access to internet has been a primary goal since 2010. Two main priorities set (2010) "Internet for all" and "Albania in the Internet age".

Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP) on the Annual Report of 2010 estimates that the number of families that have broadband internet access until the end of 2010 is about 110 thousand or about 13.7% of families, while it is estimated to be over 10.000 business subscribers. Based on these data, the number of broadband lines per 100 inhabitants is about 3.7%, compared to 2.5% that was by the end of 2009. AKEP(2018)[13] reports that the number of active users Broadband in internet from mobile networks on (Oct-Dec 2017) was around 2 million, with an increase of +20.4 % with same period in 2016 and an increase of approximately +124% vs. 2014. e number of customers Broadband accessed in Internet from x line networks was around 295.000 having an increase of +10.6% with same period of 2016 and approximately +42% comparing with 2014. is data show the fast penetration of internet, especially the increase from mobile networks. Internetworldstats.com (2018) reports for Albania that 1.932.024 or 66.4% of population are internet users and 1.400.000 are Facebook users[14]

[13] https://www.akep.al [accessed March, April 2018]

[14] internetworldstats.com, statistics reported for June 2017

Protected Areas in Albania

We aim to have the Albanian tourism in a real devolpment industry
(Blendi Klosi 2017)[15]

A protected area (PA) is a clearly de ned geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other e ective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (IUCN De nition 2008)

Albania a small sized country is very rich in biological diversity. e tremendous diversity of ecosystems and habitats supports about 3,200 species of vascular plants, 2,350 species of non-vascular plants, and 15,600 species of invertebrates and vertebrates, many of which are threatened at the global or European level (Ministry of Environment, *Annual Report 2015* Republic of Albania).

On the rst Forestry Law, Republic of Albania (1923), there are clear elements that de ne protection and special for various species and fauna and for controlled hunting. National Agency of Environment (NAE) (2014) reports that in 1940 Kune-Vain, Lezhë was proclaimed hunting reserve and as per the IUCN de nition, this one may be identi ed as the very rst PA in Albania.

e legal, political, economic and social contexts for tourism in and around protected areas vary widely across the globe, yet there are many common elements and a diversity of experiences that can enrich the understanding of those involved (IUCN 2018).

e rst law of Protected Areas in Republic of Albania[16] entered in force in 2002 and was reviewed in 2017[17] to align with the EU directives and allow to reach the goal of 17% PAs of the country territory by 2020.

e National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA)[18] manages the national system of protected areas in Albania, whereas day-to-day management is delegated to 12 Regional Administrations for Protected Areas (RAPA)

As per the categories set internationally by IUCN (International Union *for* Conservation of Nature), in country there are actually 798 PAs extended in a total of **460,060 ha or 4.600** km² of the country territory**.**

[15] Minister of Tourism and Environment, Mr. Blendi Klosi, Press Statement, 06 October 2017

[16] http://www.qbz.gov.al/doc.jsp?doc=docs/Ligj%20Nr%208906%20Dat%C3%AB%2006-06-2002.htm

[17] Law 81/2017 http://www.qbz.gov.al/botime/ etore_zyrtare/2017/PDF-2017/116-2017.pdf

[18] e Agency was established by Act of Council of Ministers , February 2015

FIGURE 2: Protected Areas in Albania, Year 2017

Category	Description	No.
I	Restricted areas	2
II	National Park	15
III	Natural Monument or Feature	750
IV	Habitat/Species Management Area	22
V	Protected Landscape/ Seascape	5
VI	Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources	4
		798

Source: National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA)

NAPA reports that Albania has recently made signi cant progress in expanding the network of PAs from 5.2% of the country's territory in 2005 to 16.02% of the country's territory in 2017. e majority of them have been designated in the category nature monument (750), but National Parks do cover approximately 210,501 ha or 46% of the total.

Stynes (1997) suggests that economic impact is part of a group of analyses that can be used to evaluate tourism in PAs (other analyses include: scal impact analysis, nancial analysis, demand analysis, bene t cost analysis, feasibility study and environmental impact assessment). In this study, such factor is not taken in consideration given the primary aim of the study and on the other hand the gaps PAs face in this perspective. e o cial data of MTE provided for this research show that 6.000 euro are the PAs incomes generated for year 2015 and only 48.000 euro for year 2017. Considering the visitor statistics of NAPA, there is a discordance between data and money generated. "PAs in Albania are facing many challenges and none of them have ticketing system, except National Park of Butrint, protected by UNESCO" stressed a high ranking o cial of MTE.

Natura 2000 (2016)[19] on the assessment conducted has identified tourism as a potential risk for Albanian PAs. In their research infrastructure development for tourism purpose have been identified as a threat in 27 protected areas (50%), though at a low level. Threats from recreational activities and tourism were reported for 31 protected areas in Albania (76%).

[19] Natura 2000 is the largest coordinated network of protected sites in the world. www.natura.al

Marketing strategies for the PAs as Tourism Destination

NAPA since it was established on 2015 is missing a promotion and marketing strategy for PAs as tourism destinations, a high ranking o cial con rms.

Leonard Maci, Director of Marketing, National Agency of Tourism(NAT)[20] said that on the promotion and marketing strategies to regional and international markets, PAs have been promoted as a competitive advantage due to a unique experience, the wilderness, virgin landscapes, ora and fauna richness they o er. Rajmonda Lajthia, ATOA also con rms that tour operators never avoid PAs on their touristic guides, even on daily ones. Villa Jose (2018) argues that the marketing industry has been focused — and somewhat obsessed — with digital for the better part of the last decade. e discussion and insights o ered in the segmentation sections of the report, highlight the importance of using a robust segmentation strategy in order to understand visitors and potential visitors and the experiences they see (Reid 2008). "We do not have yet a marketing and promotion strategy short-term or middle-term one. e actual communication plans applied by NAPA, do not rely on a segmentation strategy or any previous research done for this purpose" said Denisa Xhoga, Communication Specialist, NAPA[21].

Reid (2008) proposes that information promoting national parks is disseminated by a wide range of organizations, including protected area agencies, visitor information centers, tour operators, state tourism organizations, regional tourism organizations and corporate businesses.

NAPA has clearly identi ed as main target the domestic visitors. e NAPA statistics show that 2/3 of the total are domestic visitors and 1/3 are foreigners. e Agency has supported the raising awareness and promotion and in two main directions (i)Media communication and promotion and (ii) extensive collaboration with local communities of the PAs. (NAPA, Annual report 2017). NAPA reports that on 2015 there were not any information center or infopoints accesable. "Only promotion and marketing can make domestic visitors attracted to Albanian tourism. e potential our country is huge, but unfortunately albanians are not awared yet of this potential." said Fation Plaku[22]

NAPA statistics reports (see Figure 3) a boom of visitors in PAs sites. NAPA reports that for 2017 statistic 62.8% are of daily visitors and the rest accomodates at least one night. e most visited category by 50% of visitors is Category II, national parks.

[20] Leonard Maci, Marketing Director, National Agency of Tourism (NAT), Interview with Ana Kekezi March 2018, Tirana

[21] Denisa Xhoga, Communication Specialist, National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA), Interview with Ana Kekezi, March 2018, Tirana

[22] Fation Plaku, Travel & Tourism In uencer, Interview with Ana Kekezi, March 2018, Tirana

FIGURE 3: Number of Visitors in PAs

Visitors	2015	Jan-Sept 2017
Domestic Visitors	359.937	1.489.815
Foreign Visitors	112.080	552.101
Total	471.967	2.041.916

Source: National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA)

Denisa Xhoga claims that the rangers at national level are o ering free guides to visitors as a promotional tool to make them come back and spread their experience. "NAPA have no annual bugdet for pure advertising on traditional media or new media. ese are considered up to date as free of charge promotional tools" said Denisa.

Rajmonda Lajthia, ATOA claims that the tour operators, as main stakeholder on the sector have been clear with their demands and their proposals for the development of PAs as tourism destinations, but they remain doubtful if government implement them on the strategy.

A "cool, many to many media" for the promotion of PAs

Digital transformation is a journey, not a one o -event. McLuhan (1964) is well known for the postulate "the medium is the message". He proposes that the media, not the content that they carry, should be the focus of study. McLuhan (1964) identi ed two types of media: "hot" media and "cool" media. As per the de nition the author proposes, cool media, a more hearing focus, are the ones that need high participation from users, due to their low de nition (the receiver/user must ll in missing information). Conversely, hot media, a more visual focus, are low in audience involvement due to their high resolution or de nition. Where new media stands? e researchers suggest that new media in the way it engages it's audiences to ll the gaps and create a fuller picture, may be de ned with no doubt "cool" media.

New Media is new concept in marketing theory and developed after 1991 the www was presented to the world.[23] Nowadays industry seeks to gain from the advantages of two-way dialogue with consumers primarily through the Internet. Manovich, Lev (2002) proposes new media in 8 perspectives, arguing that new media is born in early 1920, di erently from now, where information and technology are the basement with base on Web 2.0 technology. Törenli, (2005: 159) suggests that one of the main characteristics of new media, the ows

[23] e World Wide Web was invented by **Tim Berners-Lee** and **Robert Cailliau** in 1990.

of information can be possible between user groups or individual users. Piontek, Dorota (2014) proposes that new media, especially the Internet, can be de ned as a channel of communication in terms of technology or as a platform of resources, co-created by all users. Piontek reveals that in new media there are three types of them: institutional (similar to the traditional model), social - the di erent social actors that through access to new media have become independent from institutional media agency, and individuals - each user of new media, who has the need to actively co-create them. Crosbie, Vin (2002) described on his study three di erent kinds of communication media. (i) Interpersonal media as "one to one", (ii) Mass media as "one to many", and (iii) New Media as Individuation Media or "many to many".

is paper uses the term "new media" with the meaning which is widely accepted among researcher. Social media maybe the most well-known tool of new media is accepted by researchers to have two main concepts: Web 2.0 and user site (Rouse, 2013). Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks facilitating the ow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the e cient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing of informational content (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). User generated content can be de ned as information that users provide or share on a website. e information might be a photo, video, blog or discussion forum post, poll response or comment made through a social media web (Constantinides, E., & Fountain, S. J. (2008). ere are still many ongoing debates and discussions regarding social media's universal de nition; as social media has been transforming and merging into the evolving development of New Media (Solis 2010).

"Lately, the marketers in Albania are mostly focused on social media comparing other tools of new media" said Elvin Civici, Online Account Manager[24]. Nevila Popa, tourism expert, emphasizes the usage of online tools, social media networks, blogs etc are determinative for Albanian tourism; not only as destination, but also for the foreign investments[25]. Rajmonda Lajthia stress the importance of social media in the promotion of domestic tourism. She claims that social media gain weight during last years, as per the high time consuming spent in social platforms. She identi es that most of tour operators in country have shifted from traditional media in online marketing, having a positive outcome. McCann Agency report that for 2017 Albanians consumed 143 minutes/day on social media and 91 minutes/day on online news portals.

[24] Elvin Civici, Online Account Manager, McCann Tirana, Interview with Ana Kekezi February 2018, Tirana

[25] Interview for Monitor.al, January 2018 [accessed February 2018 http://www.monitor.al/turizmi-ne-2018-ne-trend-pozitiv-problem-infrastruktura-2/]

Methodology

Methods applied

is research adopts a mixed method approach to achieving its objectives. For this research are used primary and secondary data. Piontek, Dorota (2014) suggest that in researching new media, all methods and techniques developed for examining old media, are useful, especially the quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

e insights that generated from the qualitative data collected in eld were highly bene cial to the process of data analysis and interpretation. Triangulating the ndings provided evidence for the stydy to make sense of phenomenon under study (Mathison 1988, p. 15)

Data Collection Tools

Primary data are signi cant information to lead this research; and secondary data have been employed as valuable especially the governmental and public sector statistics, reports and data.

e following methods of primary data were employed to carry out the research:

Observation (conducted in sites of 2 PAs Divjak-Karavasta National Park, Fier RAPA & Shebenik-Jabllanicë, Elbasan RAPA in natural settings, February 2018)

Semi-structured interviews with 14 participants (9 employees/civil servants in MTE, NTA, NAPA and RAPAs; 1 o cial of UNDP Albania, Denisa Xhoga, communication specialist, NAPA; Leonard Maci, Director of Marketing, NAT; Rajmonda Lajthia, Executive Director of ATOA; Elvin Civici, Online Account Manager, McCann Tirana)

In deep interviews with 3 participants (Ardian Koci, Director, RAPA of Fier; Fatmir Brazhda Former Director, RAPA of Elbasan; Fation Plaku, Photographer, travel and tourism Blogger and In uencer)

Online Surveys; Q1 (109 citizen respondents); Q2 (16 respondents employee/ civil servants in central and local government bodies directly related to tourism sector); Q3 (6 participants; 3webdesigners 3 online content experts), Q4 (6 participants In uencers & Bloggers living in Tirana)

Observation of Internet sites (webportals, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, forums, photo and video sharing) (similar to netnography proposed by Kozinets, R. but simpler)

O cial data and documents for this research by MTE, NAPA and NAT

Challenges & Limitations

Con dentiality – Ethical considerations are critical in research. Many of participants in interviews required to protect their identity in this research. Working on central and local government make them uncomfortable to reveal their identity. is barrier may present di culties to other researchers to understand in deep the primary data.

Time Barrier - e surveys conducted for this research were questionaries' sent electronically in random citizens, assuming them as potential domestic visitors. e sample of 109 respondents is considered a limited size and the Q1 maybe would have given a better result, if it would be conducted with visitors in PA's sites.

Data analyses – No data measurements or any research at national level was identi ed to support this study.

Cool media impact on Albanian protected areas

Not military zones: Protected Areas as touristic destinations

"Protected areas before '90s have been considered by state as isolated areas. Recently the government, stakeholders and community in country agreed, that access to them will assure sustainability and development to the economy and bring boost to the domestic tourism" Lefter, Koka (2016)[26].

PAs in Albania during communism regime and even in post-communism (1990-2005) have been considered as isolated areas, to be protected and conserved. " e mentality and actions of stakeholders on development and sustainability in PAs begun changing during the last decade" a high ranking o cial of MTE said. Recently the decision makers and stakeholders in PAs have been proactive to develop strategies toward a sustainable path for PAs along with access to tourism. Articles suggests that in developing countries the new conceptualization of tourism which incorporates sustainability and community participation as dominant elements is favorable to an alternative theoretical framework of development. A high ranking NAPA's sta claims that to ght the mentality of open access to PAs as tourism destinations have been quite a challenge to NAPA sta themselves. It is clear that promotion through all stakeholders of hospitality and tourism can give to PAs, the opportunity to grow and raise awareness on the unique experience they do o er for visitors. MTE (2018:9) in the draft national strategy reports that the product

[26] Former Minister of Environment, Republic of Albania (2013-2017) media statement, OraNews TV Interview 2016

of ecotourism (where PAs are included) has increased with 10%-20% /year.

Fatmir Brazhda[27] emphasizes that in the early promotional activities (2013), their moto used to be "A protected area is not a military zone". "Protected areas were perceived few years ago, by administration sta itself, as isolated perimeters to guard" said Ardian Koci, Director of Elbasan RAPA 2018[28]).

Destination Image

Destination image has been identi ed as a crucial aspect of tourism, recreation and leisure (Hall, Croy & Walker 2003; Croy 2004). e greater the exposure to images of the destination, the greater the familiarity and complexity of the image held (Smith & Croy 2005; Croy & Wheeler 2007). e greater the complexity of the image, the more knowledge of the speci c decision-making factors (Croy & Wheeler 2007). e formation of a positive perception is determined by evaluative components of image. In this process, from awareness, to availability, through to deciding on an evoked set, destination image is the deciding factor (Lawson & Baud-Bovy 1977; Richardson &Crompton 1988).

Given the increased reliance of tourism providers and destinations on their online reputation (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2011), it is critical for them to not only understand what drives social media promotion or e ectively manage it. On Q1 survey 109 out of 109 respondents con rm that image is important getting their attention and curiosity on PAs, they haven't visited before. 109 out of 109 on Q1 visit PA sites at least 2 times in year. 84% of respondents of Q1 con rm they do further searching on internet on the site, if the image attracts them. Ardian Koci, sharing his experience said that at the very beginning the team sta were profane on social media use, and image was not their focus; but the experience improved their skills. Image is identi es as a key element on MTE Draft Strategy of sustainable Tourism 2018-2022.

Stakeholders and decision makers are working with no data or researches. On Q2 11 out of 16 responded that PAs are preferred most by foreign tourist, while the o cial statistics of NAPA opposes this. On the other hand 50.5% participants of Q1 respond that have little knowledge on the touristic potential of domestic PAs, but only 17 out of 109 have responded they are not satis ed or are little satis ed with what PAs o er.

[27] Fatmir Brazhda, Former Director, RAPA of Elbasan, incl Shebenik-Jabllanic National Park, Interview with Ana Kekezi, 2018, Librazhd

[28] Ardian Koci, Director, RAPA of Fier, incl. the National Park of Divjaka, Interview with Ana Kekezi, 2018, Divjakë

e many to many media need for domestic tourism

"One click in your pro les, photos, videos or share from the coast, Alps, Tirana, Berat, Gjirokastra, nature, culinary or history of Albania has the a much higher impact than dozens of fairs, o cial meetings, or money spent for promotion. is is a good thing that you can do to Albania, to Albanian tourism. "(Blendi, Klosi, 2017)[29]

' e world narrated' is a di erent world to 'the world depicted and displayed'. (Kress, 2003:2) *e world told* is a di erent world to *the world shown*. Kress (2003:2) considers that the e ects of the move to the screen, as the major medium of communication and argues that this will produce far-reaching shifts in relations of power, and not just in the sphere of communication. Andreasen (2003) reminds us that social marketing met with resistance when it rst emerged, blinking in to the academic world like a new-born baby. Researchers suggest that 'Social marketers' turning the power of marketing to social good, thereby compensating for its de ciencies with better outcomes (e.g. Kotler, Levy, Andreasen).

It is fact that state is orienting their vision and strategies toward new media, as a key tool to promote Albanian tourism, but how and what will be the process and roadmap seems unclear yet. 109 out of 109 respondents of Q1 consider new media tools (social media and newsportals) as very important to get information on tourism. Denisa Xhoga admits that NAPA set as a main promotional goal the focus on new media tools, considering them as a "free" tool. 10 out of 16 o cial of Q2 see the use of new media tools as extremely important for the promotion of domestic tourism.

Albania is facing a rapid digitization of media channels. e annual ad spending data show that Out-of-home (OOH) advertising is "disappearing" and same way the print media. Elvin Civici, McCann Tirana claims that for advertisers print media as traditional media has "dead", while the biggest journals in country merely sells an average of 1.000 copies /day. Journal print shifted their battleground in online. Albanian Media Institute (2015) suggests that Albanian news media evaluate the role of the social media as an important means to boost the audience through the referral tra c deriving from these media.

Constantinides, E., & Fountain, S. J. (2008) present the consumers with a whole array of options in searching for value products and services and nding exactly what they need and want with minimum e ort, in line with the current customer desire for personalization, individual approach and empowerment. ere

[29] Blendi Klosi, Minister of Tourism & Environment, Speech during launching event of ODA, January 2018 http://www.javanews.al/shpallet-nisma-per-turizmin-rrjet-blogeresh-per-promovimin-e-shqiperise/

is evidence that customer reviews posted in di erent forums or online communities, Web blogs and podcasts are much more powerful as marketing tools than expert product reviews (Gillin, 2007); the in uence of blogs and podcasts is increasing because of the fast expansion of the audience and contributors.

16 out of 16 participants of Q2 respond that to promote their work they use mostly new media tools (social networks and online news portals). 78% of respondents of Q1 con rm that when deciding to visit a destination, they get information from social media, while 94.4% are daily users of social media with at least 1 hour access in them.

e cool media impact on Albanian PAs promotion

Manovich (2001) on his research on new media states that the identity of media has changed even more dramatically than that of the computer. " e statistics con rm that new media is growing its popularity in Albania and some of its components are becoming part of the mainstream" said Elvin Civici.

e latest articles and studies from the sector report an increasing attention globally on new media tools impact in Protected Areas promotion. Sinanaj, Shkelqim (2016) on his ndings on a research conducted for tourism in Vlora Region, Albania suggests that the tourist's loyalty is impacted by the elements and the platforms of social media. e role of social media in tourism is particularly signi cant and the impacts of social media use by tourists, destinations and tourism providers are manifold (Gretzel, 2018; Sigala & Gretzel, 2018). Fatmir Brazhda, former Director of Elbasan RAPA claim that + 90% of visitors that accessed the park, tag, post, comment in their social media accounts their experience in Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park.

e researchers propose that new media require a shift in marketing thinking – consumers have become highly active partners, serving as customers as well as producers and retailers, being strongly connected with a network of other consumers (orsten, 2010).

Whether it be the traditional editor with a viewership, a micro-in uencer with 5 thousand followers or a celebrity/politician with over 1 million followers, each individual has the ability to shape the industry by sharing their own opinions amongst their communities.

AIM (2015) refers that the very rst social platforms Albanians were introduced was Facebook, which is actually a leading social platform in country (Socialbakers.com)

11 out of 16 of Q2 survey participants would highly recommend mostly new media tools (social networks and online news portals) to promote PAs. None of them recommended traditional media tools such as newspapers and outdoor.

Mapping Websites and social media accounts of tourism entities

e emergence of new digital channels has allowed stakeholders to build their own "media" through which they can reach their nal audience directly. Owned media, is simply de ned as those channels the stakeholders own and control content for (including social, blog, etc.) has acted as a pull medium to achieve this goal and ultimately transform consumers into brand advocates and loyalists. A major challenge for Web site designers involves the functional complexity of the Web site's content. De Jong & Wu (2018) propose that functional complexity is considered when communication is intended to serve more than one goal or address more than one stakeholder group simultaneously.

e o cial online channels of central government bodies (MTE, NAPA and NAT) are observed in this study and confronted with the opinion of 6 professionals, 3 web designers and 3 online content experts (Q3).

6 out of 6 participants of Q3 evaluated the websites of MTE (turizmi.gov.al) and NAT as poor. Image is skipped and not considered as a key element. ey do identify that the 2 o cial websites of NAT (http://wp.akt.gov.al/ and http://albania.al) are not appealing, have poor content. From the observation these two websites exclude the domestic or foreign visitors as one is in English language only and the other in Albanian language only. e http://wp.akt.gov.al/ is considered for all 6 participants as unprofessional. On the contrary, they claim that social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter) are professional and appealing. While NAPA's webiste http://akzm.gov.al/ is identi ed from 6 out to 6 participants as an accurate website, but they would suggest much focus on image with higher quality photos, to motivate and appeal better a potential visitor. NAPA Facebook page as the only social account of NAPA is also evaluated as accurate but yet missing strong appeal, as often it loses focus from image.

12 RAPAs at national level do have websites and on social media Facebook accounts only

e websites of RAPA are only informative, not aiming promotion and marketing through this tool. e mapping of Facebook pages of 12 RAPAs found a correlation between the most visited PAs and the activity in their Facebook Pages.

e observation on Facebook and Instagram pages of actual Minister of Tourism and Environment (September 2017 – January 2018)[30] and former Minister of Environment[31] show that posts related to PAs or nature in general, seems more likable to the virtual community getting a higher number of likes, comments and shares, comparing other posts.

[30] https://www.facebook.com/klosiblendi/ ; https://www.instagram.com/blendi_klosi/

[31] https://www.facebook.com/lefterkokapolitikan/

Web portals as "purely online media"

Articles suggest that alternative media was presented in the begging of 21th century from the journalists who decided to become independent from traditional media and provide to public a diverse perspective of the information from another point of view . In Albania this is a trend embraced by many well-known journalists in country as Armand Shkullaku & Andi Bushati with Lapsi.al , Rudina Xhunga with Dritare.net, Blendi Fevziu with Opinion.al, Ylli Rakipi with Tpz.al, Mentor Nazarko with Konica.al , Mustafa Nano with Respublica.al, Enkel Demi with 27.al and others. At present, the corps of "purely online media" is being shaped as one of the most dynamic in the Albanian online space, leading to increasingly frequent novelties and developments (Albanian Media Institute, 2015:18)

Denisa Xhoga and Elvin Civici claim that articles on purely online media have high impact and more credibility than paid online ad. Denisa Xhoga stress the fact that NAPA has focused her work with journalists mainly on web portals, as virtual community tends to engage and share the information. Webportals are considered for 109 out of 109 of Q1 respondents, as the fastest way to get information.. Whether 56.9% of them con rm that when deciding to visit a destination they get information from online news media. On the other hand, 16 out of 16 respondents of Q2 consider internet as the highest in uencer to their work.

Word of Mouth in online context

Word-of-mouth represents a highly in uential information source for potential visitors and is therefore of great interest to tourism marketing professionals.

Kotler & Keller (2007) suggests that word of mouth Communication (WOM) is a communication process for the provision of advice either individually or in groups for a product or service that aims to provide personal information. Communication by WOM is considered very e ective in expediting the process of marketing and be able to provide bene ts to the organization. Other researchers con rm that customers prefer to seek advices from the people who have already visited that particular destination than merely trusting the conventional advertisements from the suppliers. (Crompton, 1992; Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Gligorijevic & Luck, 2012; Hyde & Laesser, 2009; Park, Lee & Han, 2007; Seddighi & eocharous, 2002; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Ring, & Dolnicar (2016) on their research found that tourists share both verbal and visual word-of-mouth content. ey do suggest that stakeholders have the possibility to leverage word-of-mouth.

87.7% of respondents of Q1 trust more a recommended destination by a friend/relative rather than from other forms. 100% of them consider the online comments, posts and suggestions of their friends/familiars equal trustable as the traditional WOM. Ardian Koci claimed that +70% of domestic visitors in Divjaka National Park have been referred by a relative or friend, or a person they do follow

in social media. Particularly as surveys indicate that word-of-mouth generally plays an important part in in uencing visitation to national parks (Eagles & McCool 2002). 77 out of 109 respondents of Q1 used word-of-mouth sources to make destination choices.

Wiki Platforms & Blogosphere

Wiki platforms are new media tool. Albanian language has its own space and as reported by Wikipedia. e community consists of 102.780 registered users, 296 of them have contributed with at least an editing during the last months. e information on Albanian language, for Albanian tourism and protected areas from observation seem extremely limited comparing with the one o ered in English language. Also many bio links provided in Albanian language section of Wikipedia are not functional.

85.2% of the respondents of Q1 use Wikipedia as 2nd source of search, after Google. Another nding was that 55.6% of respondents of Q1 were using even social media (such as Facebook, Instagram or YouTube) as searching vehicles for tourism destinations.

e largest number of blogs is Albania are created and hosted by Wordpress and fewer Blogspot platform. But it is hard to track in Albania bloggers or any blog for traveling, hospitality and tourism. Albanian bloggers and in uencers are mostly focused on culinary and fashion.

Bloggers and In uencers

Social media also support the emergence of in uencers that occupy a middle ground between consumers and commercial users (Kozinets et al., 2010). eMarketer 2018, reports that for In uencers, Instagram is the clear-cut favorite and nearly 80% consider it their primary platform for collaborations. 6 out of 6 participants of Q4 members of ODA's network claimed for this study that they prefer better Instagram, while advertisers they collaborate prefer to use both Instagram and Facebook. None of them had a Twitter account.

Only 9.1% of respondents of Q1 con rmed that they were not noticing or ignoring the destination of a post done/tagged by a VIP/public person (they fan/ like and follow in social media).

Albanian ODA[32] - the bloggers' network

A 2015 survey by Tomoson[33] emphasizes how in uencer marketing can be highly lucrative for those brands who engage in it. Businesses are making $6.50

[32] ODA word in Albanian language means room

[33] Survey 2015 "In uencer Marketing Study" [Accessed 10 March 2018 https://blog.tomoson.com/in uencer-marketing-study/

for every $1 spent on in uencer marketing. Most businesses get solid results from in uencer marketing, with just the bottom 18% failing to generate any revenue. 59% of marketers intend to increase their in uencer marketing budget in the next year.

ODA – the Albanian blogger's network was an initiative of MTE launched in January 2018, to promote Albanian tourism. Over 200 Albanian representatives of art, culture, business from Albania and beyond borders are part of this network. "Jehoje dhe ti"[34] was a 60 second promoting video of the Albanian tourism that was posted rstly on the Minister Blendi Klosi social accounts, and after posted or shared by 200 bloggers. is video became rapidly a viral one. Marketers suggest that in uencer marketing is about data, not celebrity deals. "We have not done yet any measurement or analyze on "Jehoje dhe ti" promotional video" acknowledged a civil servant sta of NAT.

Own Media

"It's a pity Albanians overestimate what neighbors o er. It's matter of culture and mentality. e Albanians does not grow since childhood with the love for nature, as other citizens worldwide do. I am surprised that most Albanians have discovered their country lately, mainly from social media" Fation Plaku, 2018

In uencer marketing in travel and tourism builds on the importance of word-of-mouth in the travel context (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). Studies suggest that in the age of social media, consumers move from being fans to being producers of promotional content for brands, and from occasional endorsers to micro-celebrity-seeking social media in uencers (Hearn & Schoenho , 2016).

Fation Plaku, whom passion for nature, have "transformed" him on photographer, a blogger and mostly identi ed as a key In uencer, while sharing his thoughts for this research admitted that he desired to make people visit the beauty of Albania nature, but he didn't know how. New media tool or "his own media" as Fation refers to his website and social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter) opened a real window to him. He started to share and shoot his unique moments for fun and from many years now he is doing it professional way. He also con rms that his favorite and most followed channel is Instagram.

Fation claims that this is the rst time he is interviewed/approached for study purpose. Same claimed even the 6 participants of Q4. Researchers admit that there is a lack of research that investigates the travel and tourism in uencer marketing phenomenon Gretzel, U. (2018).

[34] Jehoje dhe ti - Echo even You – a direct appeal to the users, to make share the video, Video launched on January 2018

PAs success stories; cheers to cool media

Social media allow destinations to contact visitors at relatively low cost and higher levels of e ciency that can be achieved with more traditional communication tools (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). M.E. McCombs, D.L. Shaw (2004) suggest that those topics which are the most frequently covered by the media are seen as the most important. e crossing of secondary data and statistics of NAPA "decided" on the 2 success stories of this study (see gure 4 and 5).

As the outcome of the increasing in uence of tourism, natural and protected area management is evolving from one primarily focused around onsite management and conservation, to one that more broadly encompasses a greater range of holistic recreation and tourism experiences. In dealing with this evolution, national parks and protected area managers are now required to balance onsite interpretation activities with marketing and demand management activities. (Reid, Mike 2008). Natura2000 Albania (June 2016) in their assessment ndings emphasize that protected area managers complained, that they are often not informed about or involved in research activities, and that researchers do not address their management priorities and needs. In the assessment is also reported, that in some protected areas in country, research has not been conducted for a long time. IUCN reveals that the continuing and dramatic increase in both international and domestic travel poses signi cant opportunities for managers of the globe over 100,000 protected areas.

FIGURE 4 : Visitors in Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park

Year	2015	2017
Visitors	400	13.000

Source: RAPA of Elbasan

FIGURE 5: Visitors in Divjak-Karavasta National Park

Year	2015	2017
Visitors	1.500	383.000

Source: RAPA of Fier

Divjakë-Karavasta National Park – e shelter of Curly Pelicans

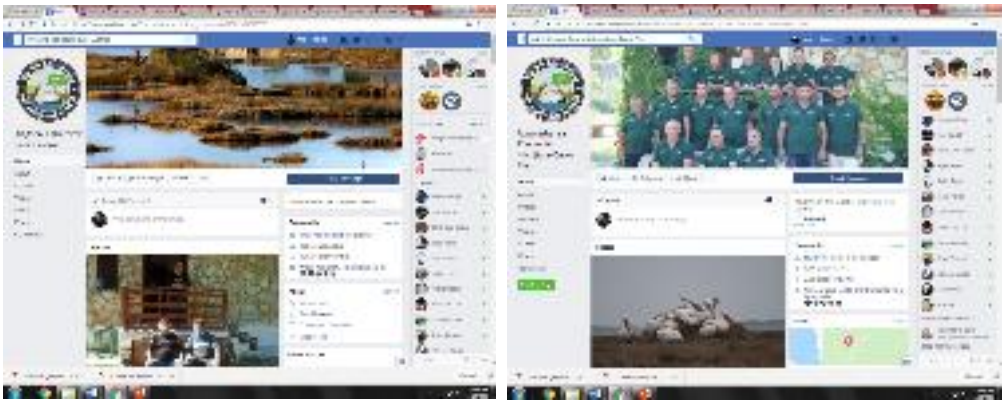
Divjakë-Karavasta National Park, managed by RAPA of Fier is well known, as the Shelter of Curly Pelicans (Dalmatian Pelican). 97 out of 109 respondents

of Q1 identi ed this PA with the colonies of curly pelican and 100 of them have visited it at least once.

On the internet mapping (online portals, TV chronicles and social media posts) done for this PA found that many journalists, government high ranking o cials and public personalities, contribute the success of the Shelters of Pelicans to the passion and dedication of Ardian Koçi, Director, RAPA of Fier.

Ardian, managing RAPA of Fier for 5 years is a profound passionate, eager to attract visitors. He states that he found Facebook, as the only way to have visitors in park. On 2013 the agency of PAs was not established yet by law and PAs were managed under the sector of forestry. "In 2013 I was appointed Director of Regional Directorate of Forestry of Fier. Few visitors were coming" said Ardian. He said that the decision to open a Facebook page (see gure 6, left) was the best step ever took. "People were annoyed from tagging, but I didn't gave up" con rms Ardian.

FIGURE 6: Left Drejtoria e shërbimit Pyjor, Fier (created 2013); Right RAPA of Fier (created 2015)



Source: Facebook, Screenshot 2018

Statcounter Global Stats (2018) report that, Facebook leads with 93.4%, followed by YouTube with 1.64% for April 2017- March 2018 period, social media in Albania. Ardian claim that the National Park was not visited at least once, even by citizens that live next to Divjaka. He identi ed Facebook as the only free of charge tool he had in power, to raise awareness of the park and make people visit the lagoon. e page he opened back time in 2013 is still active, and with the establishing of NAPA by law 2015, Ardian activated a new page (see gure 6, right). Ardian claims that it was Facebook that attracted the journalists and reporters to promote the lagoon and raised interest in tour operators.

Healya and Wilson (2015) propose that host hospitality social media experts suggest that engagement on social media improves customer service and brand awareness, but they cannot validate if it in uences buying behavior. Ardian claim that behavior of visitors has radically changed. " e domestic visitors' main attraction during 2013- 2014 was culinary, now we can clearly identify that this trend changed for good. e culinary have altered as an extension, while main motivation and hours spent from domestic visitors are dedicated to lagoon and other areas of the Park" con rmed Ardian. He aims that the park be perceived by domestic tourists as a brand.

Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park – e biggest national park

"Shebenik-Jabllanicë National Park[35], managed by RAPA of Elbasan is a new discovery to key stakeholders; media, citizens and tour operators" claims Fatmir Brazhda, Former Director, RAPA of Elbasan. e park is known in online media, as the biggest national park in country, but yet not clearly identi ed by potential visitors. 76 out of 109 respondents of Q1 have heard of the park, and only 22 out of 109 have visited it.

Shebenik-Jabllanicë during 2013 was on a critical stage of brand awareness, given the fact that it was a brand new National Park. " e role of media have been vital to make the introduction of our Park. On early stages, we started with a Facebook page (2013) and after that focused on local media and community" state Fatmir. In the Facebook page mapping of this park[36], it shows that the authority of in uencers is adopted as a tool to promote the PA. Denisa Xhoga con rmed that national TV and newspaper journalists/reporters never heard of Shebenik-Jabllanicë, when she joined NAPA in 2015. Fatmir claims that social media is crucial to attract potential visitors, but success on delivering the experience in the Park is considered decisive that visitors go back or return "Shebenik-Jabllanicë ambassadors".

Conclusions and recommendations

Zeng & Geristen 2014 call for future research into social media in tourism and in developing countries suggesting that this may provide productive research environments. is study gave some important ndings for impact of new media tools in protected areas as tourism destination in Albania as a developing country, where PAs have been lately considered by stakeholders as a high potential for tourism sector.

[35] In 2008 declared by law National Park

[36] https://www.facebook.com/ShebenikJablanicaNationalPark/

Findings of this study opposes the nding of Gover & Kumar 2007 in global rank where they identi ed that the role of internet was less important than was expected considering the population sampled. In this study internet and new media tools are key players to promote domestic tourism in PAs but also to get and share information.

First conclusion is that if protected areas and especially national parks who have more potential for accommodation units and recreation activities creation, need to become knowledgeable about marketing strategies and tools, and be competitive both from a product as well as a communication perspective.

Second conclusion is that perceptions of the brand and value of PAs as tourism destinations strongly relate with the promotion on new media tools.

Another nding is that protected areas can leverage their owned media channels to speak directly to their fan base. Word of mouth in traditional and mostly on online context, have been a promoter and ampli er to spread the message and raise brand awareness of PAs. e in uencers can be lucrative to PAs (destination image)- when it's done correctly and when proper measurements are done. New media is important to Albanian citizens for getting information and having a decision on their next destination

Use modern and digital promoting tactics is one of the main recommendation. New media tools are suggested given the fact that tourism is a cluster very in uenced by new trends. New media tools are advice, also as cost e ective ones. Suggestions from this research are new media tools are swimming in rapid change environment, therefore they do need a continuous and persistent update.

e study identi ed existing barriers in the tourism sector, which should be resolved by active involvement of di erent stakeholders. E ective marketing strategies may foster competitiveness of Albanian tourism to domestic tourists.

It should be noted that many departmental websites are quite general and do not necessarily focus on promoting particular parks, but are rather a functions tool to access the department. is often makes them di cult to navigate and not consumer friendly.

In the literature review by Hawthorne (2014), only 25% organizations measure in detail the in uences social media content marketing. is study suggests that in Albania none of the governmental or public sector has done any measurement on this context. For promotion and marketing strategies on domestic tourism is important to know the needs, desires and expectations of domestic visitors, therefore researches and deep analyses are highly recommend to lead to better results and understanding.

Another recommendation as other researchers found is that a tailor-made social media marketing approach targeting speci c market segments would be critical to attract potential tourists in PAs (Zeng & Geristen 2014)

e research highlights the need for further studies into the impact new media have on destination decision-making and the actual use and experience of di erent communication tools. It is signi cant to encourage investigation about the positive impact of social media marketing on the development aspects of a sustainable tourism0 Further research is needed to integrate and complete the analysis with various methodologies, to deepen the impact of the new media in tourism cluster in developing countries and more speci cally in protected areas.

Bibliography

AKEP (2010) *Annual Report 2010*, pp. 19-20

Andreasen, A.R. (2003) ' e Life Trajectory of Social Marketing: Some Implications', Marketing eory 3(3): 293–303.

Albanian Institute of Media (2015*) Internet development and social media in Albania*, pp. 7-35.

Albanian Institute of Media (2015) "*Social Media and their use by Albanian Media*", Tirane

Arvind Rangaswamy, Bernd Skiera (2010) *e Impact of New Media on Customer Relationships*. Journal of Service Research 13: 311

Colin McGinn (2004). *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP. pp.3-5, 121-122, 162-163

Constantinides, E., & Fountain, S. J. (2008). Web 2.0: Conceptual foundations and marketing issues. Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice,9 (3), 231-244.

Eagles, P. F. J. 1992. *e travel motivations of Canadian ecotourists.* Journal of Travel Research, 31(2): 3–7

European Commission Institutional Paper 055. June 2017. Brussels. [Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/ les/ip055_en.pdf]

Fodness, D. 1994. *Measuring tourist motivation*. Annals of Tourism Research, 21(3): 555–581.

Franklin and Crang (2001) *e trouble with tourism and travel theory?* Sage Publications

Gillin , P . (2007) . e New In uencers, A Marketer's Guide to the New Social Media , Quill Driver Books\Word Dancer Press, Inc, CA, USA

GIZ (2016) e sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, Albania

Govers, R., Go. F.M. & Kumar, K. (2007) Promoting Tourism Destination Image, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 46 No. 1, pp. 15-23.

Gretzel, U. (2017). *Social Media Activism in Tourism*. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 15(2), 1-14.

Gretzel, U. (2018). *In uencer marketing in travel and tourism.* In Sigala, M. & Gretzel, U. (Eds.), Advances in Social Media for Travel, Tourism and Hospitality: New Perspectives, Practice and Cases, pp. 147-156. New York: Routledge

Hall, Derek R. (2000) *Tourism as sustainable development? e Albanian experience of* '*transition*' **e International Journal of Tourism Research; Bognor Regis Vol. 2,** Iss. 1,

Hammedi, W. & Virlée, J. (2018). *E-WOM engagement: is it worth talking only about posters and lurkers?* In Sigala,

Hasting, G and Saren, M (2003). *e critical contribution of social marketing eory and application,* SAGE Publication, Volume 3(3): 305–322 211.

Healy, omas G. and Wilson, Alan (2015) *Social media marketing in the hospitality industry : is it worth the e ort?* In: e 14th International Research Symposium on Service Excellence in Management,

Hearn, A., & Schoenho , S. (2016). *From celebrity to in uencer.* In Marshall, P. D., & Redmond, S. (2015). A companion to celebrity. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons/ Blackwell,

IMF, Albania Country Report No 17/374 , 14 November 2017

INSTAT, National Albanian Statistics Institute [Available at http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/industria-tregtia-dhe-sh%C3%ABrbimet/turizmi/]

IUCN (2006) e visitor experience challgenge, *PARKS,* Vol 16 No 2 [Retrieved at http://parksjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/parks_16_2.pdf]

Jacob L. Nelson & Ryan F. Lei (2017): *e E ect of Digital Platforms on News Audience Behavior, Digital Journalism*

Kozinets, R. V., De Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. C., & Wilner, S. J. (2010). *Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities.* Journal of Marketing, 74(2), 71-89.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the New Media Age*. London: Routledge pp. 1, 2, 16, 35

Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. Tourism management, 29(3), 458-468.

M. Lister at al.(2009) *New media: A critical introduction.* Second edition, London–New York, p. 2; Cambridge 2014, pp. 1-23 .

M. McCombs (2014) *Setting the agenda. e mass media and public opinion*. Second edition,

Manovich, L. (2001). *e language of new media.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Marchiori, E., & Cantoni, L. (2011). *e online reputation construct: Does it matter for the tourism domain? A literature review on destinations' online reputation.* Information Technology & Tourism, 13(3), 139-159.

McLuhan, Marshall (1964) *Understanding Media: e Extensions of Man*

M.E. McCombs, D.L. Shaw, (2004) *e agenda-setting function…,* op. cit., pp. 176–187;

M. & Gretzel, U. (Eds.). *Advances in Social Media for Travel, Tourism and Hospitality: New Perspectives, Practice and Cases*, pp. 161-179. New York: Routledge.

Menno D. T. De Jong1 and Yuguang Wu2 (2018) Functional *Complexity andWeb Site Design: Evaluating the Online Presence of UNESCO, World Heritage Sites* Journal of Business and Technical Communication 1-26 [a]

Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Republic of Albania (2018) e Strategy of Tourism 2018-2022 Draft. [Retrieved from http://turizmi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Strategjia-e-Turizmit-18-22-draft-1.pdf [accessed March 2018]

Nick Bobo (2013). *Toward a Better Understanding of Evolving Social Networks* [Dissertation]. Konstanz: University of Konstanz

Picard, M. (1996) Bali: *Cultural Tourism and Touristic Culture.* Singapore: Archipelago Press.

Piontek, Dorota. (2014) *New Media Old eories, R/evolutions:* Global Trends & Regional Issues, Volume 2, Issue 1,

Por do, Enrico (2018) *Tourism as Economic Resource for Protecting the Landscape: Introducing Touristic Initiatives in Protected Areas of Albania*

Reid, Mike & Wearing, Stephen & Croy, Glen (2008) *Marketing of protected areas as a tool to in uence visitors' pre-visit decisions / Protected areas (PAs) are globally considered as a key strategy for biodiversity conservation and provision of ecosystem services.*

Ring, A., Tkaczynski, A. & Dolnicar, S. (2016) Word-of-Mouth – Online, O ine, Visual or Verbal? *Journal of Travel Research,* 55(1), 481-492.

RisiAlbania (Nov 2014) *Analysis of the Market, Tourism sector in Albania and the obstacles of business for growth, Report from Destination Management Organization,* Tirana, Albania

Schaefer, M. W. 2014. "*Social Media Explained: Untangling the World's Most Misunderstood Business Trend.*"

Sinanaj, Shkelqim (2016) *Marketing of Social Media in Tourism* PhD thesis http://www.doktoratura.unitir.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/dizertacioni-sh.sinanaj.pdf

Solis, B. (2007) T*he Social Media Manifesto.* (http://www.briansolis.com/2007/06/future-ofcommunications-manifesto-for/ [accessed 16.3.2018]).

eunissen, P., Mersham, G., & Rahman, K. (2010). Chapter 5: *e New Media, Cultural Transformation,*

orsten Hennig- urau, Edward C. Malthouse, Christian Friege, Sonja Gensler, Lara Lobschat,

Violeta Cvetkoska & Petra Barišić (2017) *e e ciency of tourism industry in the Balkans* , Proceedings of the Faculty of Economics in East Sarajevo Year 2017, Issue 14, p. 31-41

orsten Hennig- urau, Edward C. Malthouse, Christian Friege, Sonja Gensler, Lara Lobschat,

World Travel and Tourism Council 2018 [Retrieved on https://www.wttc.org/-/media/ les/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2018/albania2018.pdf]

Zeng, B. , and R. Geristen. (2014). "*What do We know about Social media in Tourism*". Tourism Management Perspectives. 10 : 27-36.

Webography

https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/countries/al/nature-protection-and-biodiversity-why/albaniabio1.jpg/view

http://www.natura.al/news.php?lang=al&uid=36

eMarketer (2018) "INFLUENCER MARKETING ROUNDUP" Retrieved from https://www.emarketer.com/public_media/docs/eMarketer_In uencer_Marketing_Roundup_2018.pdf

E-Marketer (2018) https://www.emarketer.com/content/for-in uencers-instagram-is-close-to-the-only-platform-that-matters [Accessed on 15 March 2018]

In uencermarketinghub.com (2017a). Why in uencer marketing will explode in 2017. Accessed online (February 25, 2018) at: https://in uencermarketinghub.com/why-in uencer-marketingwill-explode-in-2017/

IUCN [Accessed March 2018 https://www.iucn.org/news/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/201609/towards-sustainable-tourism-protected-areas-albania

Wikipedia https://sq.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faqja_kryesore [accessed March 24, 2018]

http://croatia.panda.org/en/?299891/WWF-praises-Albanian-parliament-for-adopting-Law-On-Protected-Areas