

THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF VLORA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Economic and touristic sustainable development, is considering a necessary social action because of the trend and dynamics of contemporary global developments. It is converted into standards and principles that should be applied effectively in our lives. Tourism is one of the largest industries in the worldwide economy and it is taking great development especially in Vlora district, which has the greatest length of coastline, with 30% of total coastal line of the nation. It constitutes an important potential for the economy of this city, but to still have this potential in the future it is necessary not only to develop the tourism, but to achieve a sustainable development of tourism so that tourists do not remain only on natural beauty that Vlora offers. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism as the ideal model. For a short time, ecotourism became a worldwide phenomenon by shifting interest towards its new developments. Vlora district in the last two decades of a wild and endless transition is suffering from poor waste management, poor infrastructure, and extremely deteriorated condition of the roads leading to tourist destinations main points. That is why Vlora as well as the Albanian tourism is a giant of modern engine but seeks to manage environmental and infrastructure problems as well as management of the tourism product marketing.

Keywords: Economic profit, sustainable development, economic profit, tourist destination, eco-tourism, tourism product.

INTRODUCTION

Today, Albania represents a special case for development of the tourism into an industry of countless values. The two most important seas (Ionian and Adriatic) of Mediterranean are separated in Vlora. It has made a leap in the development of tourism these last ten years with its beauty and precious history, with its people and its culture, with its traditional cuisine intertwined with the Italian one, where the only difference is the price two or three times lower than in Italy. Taking place in the heart of the Mediterranean it has return its monumental, cultural, natural values in a real tourism industry. Albanian monuments for thousand of reasons are almost unknown perhaps even aggressive coverage of local media, especially foreign. Natural resources remain the main motivating factor for many tourists in the choice of tourist destinations. Return to nature, eating healthily and use of natural potentials is a global movement that reflects on tourism of Vlora.

The target

The aim of this paper is the identification of Geographic, natural, historic, social and cultural demographics, potentials by analyzing the development of the tourism sector in this space and how the movements and flow of tourism and its economic benefits appears. For the realization of this paper are used research, analysis - synthesis, surveillance, comparative and prognosis methods, etc.

GEOGRAPHIC POSITION OF VLORA

Vlora is located in southwest of Albania, 135 km from Tirana, 72 km from Italy and 134 km Greece. The border length of Vlora district is 273 km from which 129 km are land borders and 144 km aquatic. Vlora is among the districts with the greatest length of the coastal line, with 30% of total coastal line of the country. Its coast with a length of 144 km, is located in the Adriatic and Ionian seas. Mediterranean features of the landscape, climate and culture are its main characteristic. In the northern part of Vlora district is located the district of Fier. In the district of Vlora there 'mountainous areas like Cika Mount (2045m) above sea level, the mountain of Sevasarit etc. The capital of the district is the city of Vlora with approximately 140,000 inhabitants. Other cities are: Orikum, Himara and Selenica. The total population of the district is approximately 200,000 and the number of villages is estimated at 95.

Fig. 1 The map of Vlora district

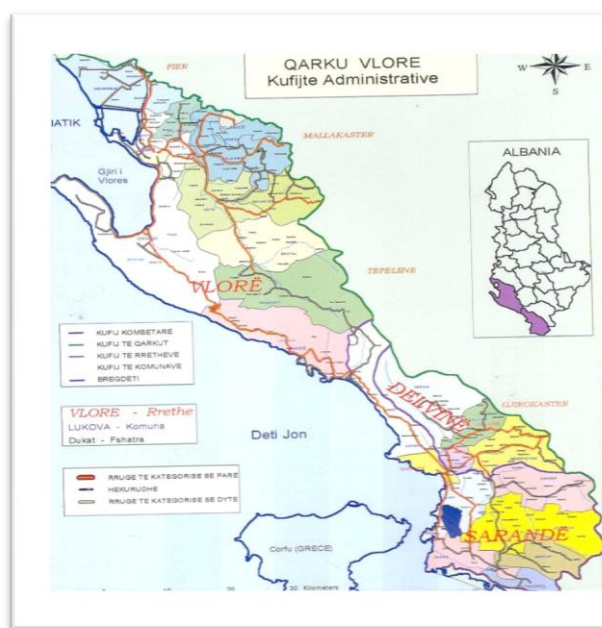
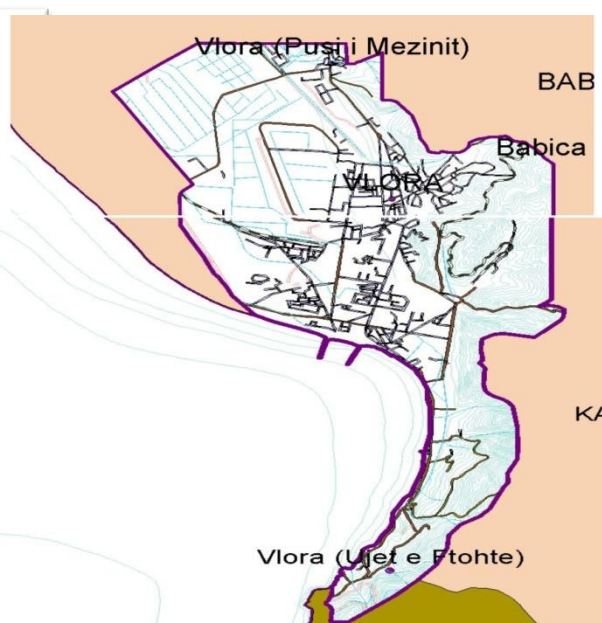


Fig. 2 The map of Vlora city



Vlora is one of the most important routing throughout the Republic of Albania for tourists. Within a very short time Vlora gives you the opportunity to visit and touch in a short time the beauty of the sea and freshness of the mountain, the historic centers, archeological and monumental. On the Flag Square there are the ruins of the ancient city (2500- years old). Objects of the IV-V BC can be found in historical and ethnographic museum. In this square there are other important monuments of national character such as flagpole or Unknown Soldier which rises over the tomb of the First Albanian Prime Minister Ismail Qemali. From this square we can continue on the "Justin Godard" street where there are important buildings like the house of Marigo Posios (the woman who embroider the Albanian Flag for the Indipedence Day), the building of the first Albanian post etc.

THE HISTORY OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ALBANIA

Vlora for many decades of XX century, has been an isolated country as all Albania. This fact had negative consequences on economy and policy, but on ecology and culture had some positive aspects. Many Albanian provinces were not frequented by tourists, which brought maintaining a virgin beauty as happened in Vlora, and today they are the rarest and most beautiful and most wanted in the world. Before 1990, for foreign tourists were difficult or

impossible to come to this country due to many factors. During the 1990s the concept of tourism for the Albanian population was too tight. Going on the sea, or in mountains, for about 15 days a year was considered by the residents, as a way to cure various diseases.¹ Prof. Dr. Dh.Doka, Prof. As. Dr. B.Draçi "Gjeografia e Turizmit"

After 1990 the situation of Albania continues to be difficult in many aspects, especially on economy. A good part of Albanians emigrated abroad considering Albania as a country in which we could not live and could never become good, but the rest who were unable to emigrate is aggravating day by day to ensure livelihood. Political changes after 1990, has significantly changed the structure of the Albanian economy. Many new conditions were created which make very good premise for promoting tourism. Among these conditions we can mention:

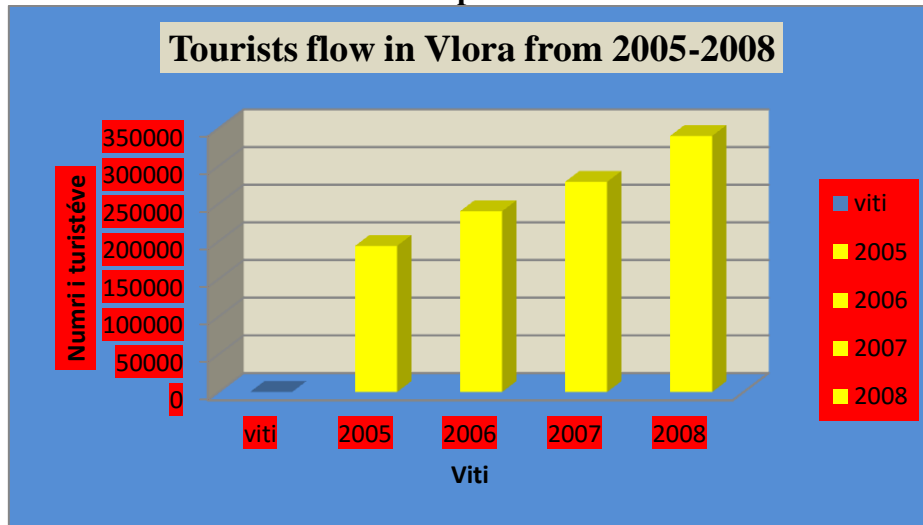
- The opening of the country after its long isolation;
- Membership of Albania in various international organizations;
- Assessment of tourism in general as one of the most perspective branches of the Albanian economy;
- The recovery of other sectors of the economy, close to tourism as (trade, services, transport, construction);
- Encourage of local and foreign investment in tourism, etc.

All these conditions have contributed somewhat to the further development of Albania, returning to the rare touristic values that it has on its territory, seeing tourism as one of the only options to get out from the crisis that this country has passed. The report of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2007 based on 2005 data, which evaluates and ranks the competitiveness of tourism in different countries of the world, Albania was the 90 by 124 countries of the world. This shows that Albania has the potential to compete successfully in the field of tourism and it has great potential in tourism, people are hospitable and open to visitors. Anyway Albania shows weaknesses that harm competitiveness, such as lack of political will for action, poor protection and environmental management, not including of natural and cultural assets in tourism. As the result of the above factors, only in recent years tourism began to flourish and there is also a chance for Albania to benefit from positive and negative experiences of developed tourism countries.² Ministria e Turizmit, Kultures, Rinise dhe Sporteve, Strategjia Sektoriale e Turizmit 2007-2013

TOURISTIC MOVEMENTS AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS IN VLORA

Vlora is one of the areas with touristic enormous potential, where every individual can find itself in one of the types of tourism that Vlora offers. Year by year it has been increasing evaluation, affirmation and promotion of tourism in Vlora. Proof of this is the tourist flow. In our analysis we are based on tourist flow during the last 5 years, which best serves to the purpose and subject of the study.

Graphic 1

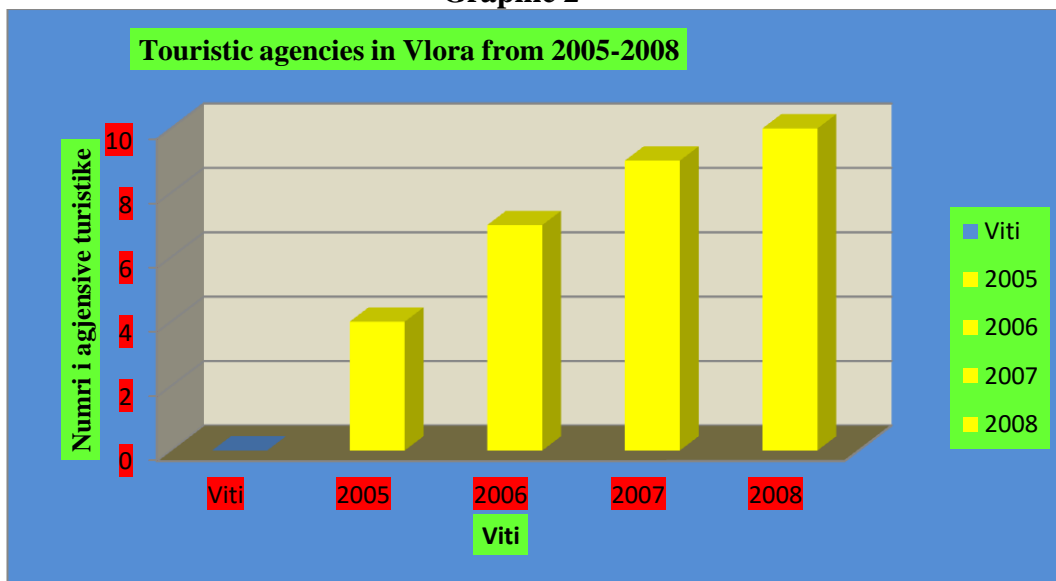


Source: Tourism Department of Vlora City

A clear presentation gives the graphic no. 1, which represents the number of tourists which are involved in tourist traffic in Vlora during 2005-2008. As it is evidenced by the graphical presentation it is easily understandable that the number of tourists has increased starting from 170,000 tourists in 2005 to 350,000 tourists in 2008. In terms of the tourists origin it has become more diverse from year to year. Besides domestic tourists in Vlora it is increased the number of foreign tourists compared to those domestic.

If we will do the analysis based on graphical presentation related to the tourists origin we see that it is a sustainable relationship between domestic, Kosovo and foreigners tourists but it is more than obvious that Albanian ethnic tourists are dominated. In the tourist offer of a country should have the elements that respond best to tourism development. So, tourism agencies play an important role in the promotion of tourist areas and their potentials, bringing a direct impact on tourist traffic growth. The number of tourist agencies during the period under the study has increased. We can say that in 2005 there were only four travel agencies and in 2008 their number has been doubled.

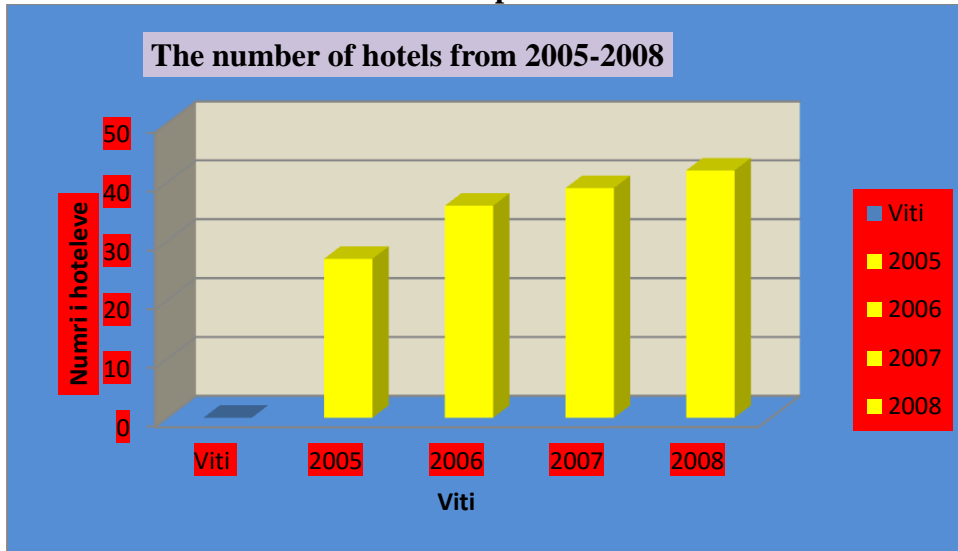
Graphic 2



Source: Tourism Department of Vlora City

Hotel Units and resorts that they offer are one of the accumulation centers of financial income from tourism. Their number each year has been increased and so is the quality of service they offer. The number of hotel units has increased from 25 hotels in 2005 to around 40 hotel units in 2008.

Graphic 3



Source: Tourism Department of Vlora City

It has a positive trend regarding to the nights which every tourists stay in Vlora. In 2005 the average staying of nights per tourist was 3-4 nights, in 2006 it was 4-6 nights and in 2008 it was 7-10 nights. All these statistics shows the improving of tourism infrastructure and has been reflected in financial income from tourism. We can see it through the below graphic.

Graphic 4



Source: Tourism Department of Vlora City

As it result in the graphical presentation: in 2005, financial income from tourism was estimated at 5 million dollar, a figure which grew up gradually year by year reaching about 8 million dollar in 2008. For the five years even there are not precise data it is assumed that tourism revenues are growing as a result of the total number added by foreign tourists. The

impact on the economy of the city of Vlora is quite large where 1 in 4 people work directly or indirectly in the tourism sector.

TOURISM IN FRONT OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY CHALLENGES

The tourism development has not gone forward but it has just been following the economic development, nevertheless it can far ahead if it respects natural and human environment. The area where tourism will be developed works only in the system and the system itself could work only if it will be open meaning that this area should work as a buffer. "Buffer area" is the area which is stated to able to attract tourists from many different attractions while turning into a value for the entire community, all of its values such as environmental, cultural and human values. Well, that territory, which is able not only to host tourists, but also that, just like water into a sponge, to transmit in merited and smart way from a territorial actor system to another across space and bid territory. In this case, the tourist activity, no matter how "successful" seems at the hotel or restaurants level, does not confer any economic effect on area.

According to the WTO (World Tourism Organization) sustainable tourism is called "tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and residents while protecting and improving the possibility for the future". Sustainable tourism aims to ensure a sustainable operation that is part of the ecological, economic and socio-cultural in every level in terms as domestic demand as well as external. Sustainable tourism is an industry that seeks to have a low impact on the environment and local culture, where on one hand helps to generate income, employment, and in on the other hand contributes to the conservation of ecosystems. It is defined as a process that meets the needs of present tourists and communities while protecting and increasing needs in the future. Sustainable tourism activities should have minimal impact on the environment and culture of the hosting community. Ethical bases of sustainable tourism are closely ambiguous "demand" and "responsibility". So it could be said that sustainable tourism is built on tourism's four key pillars which are:

- Economic sustainability
- Ecological sustainability
- Cultural sustainability
- Local political sustainability

Basic Principles of Sustainable Tourism, according to WTO are:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Supply & demand for competitive tourism

Tourism holds a great potential as a catalyst for economic growth and therefore is a key sector in macro-economic level. The industry is powerful in job creation on labor market and

a major source governmental revenue. There exist substantial connection results between other sectors such as construction, transport, supplying, agriculture, food industry and handcraft. here are substantial linkage with other sectors like construction, transport, furniture, agriculture, food and souvenirs. Vision below formulates the desired achievements of tourism's future in Albania. The main objectives of macro-economic tourism sectors development are:

- generate jobs and income
- accelerate economic and social development throughout the country
- improve living conditions in Albania
- initiate economic activities
- create a positive image of the country internationally as a tourist destination
- increase profits for the state in foreign currencies and entry fees
- develop sustainable tourism in time and environmentally friendly.

From the analysis and observation for a tourist potential in the country and meanwhile other factors affecting tourism development in Albania, results on Albania's main tourist types of products as following the list below:

- Sun bathing and beach tourism
- Special interest tourism
- Urban tourism / business tourism and conferences
- Family tourism
- Eco tourism
- Adventure tourism
- Religious tourism
- Agro tourism
- Mountain tourism
- Underwater tourism
- Historical tourism

Preconditions for tourism development

In order to achieve the objectives and realize the implementation of strategies necessary pre-conditions are required to be met:

- ***Principles of sustainable tourism development needs be accepted at all levels.*** Sustainability is a key factor for tourism development in Albania. Only environment-friendly development process will be the basis for a successful economic development of tourism.
- ***Basic infrastructure.*** Limited infrastructure is a major problem for the rapid development of tourism in most Albania's regions as well as in Vlora. It is necessary to build an airport in the future in southern Albania for civil use of charter flights. Charter flights are valued as an outstanding importance for international tourism market development in the future. A fully efficient improvement of sewage and waste treatment is necessary to keep interested sites clean and attractive while ensuring a sustainable development of tourism. It is needed to an improvement on waste management which are generated from the construction process. Road connection, water supply and electricity supply are also important issues affecting the tourism development.
- ***Clarification of land ownership and construction.*** Clarification as soon as possible the legal issues for land ownership and construction facilities.

- **Law and regulation of tourism at national and regional levels.** Develop a modern tourism law and additional regulations for tourism development from responsible state bodies.
- **Compulsory implementation of law.** Enforcement of existing law is essential for tourism sustainable development, especially in construction field such as regulations, building permits and pollution.
- **Clear responsibility at all levels for tourism development.** Clear definition of responsibilities within the ministry of tourism departments, ministries and other institutions related to tourism.
- **Regional and national stability.**
- **Improve the information system.** Sufficient tourism development requires profound development of information about supply and demand. Efficient data collection and analysis are essential according by international standards at the national, regional and local levels.
- **Engaging the public/private sector.** Tourism development should be promoted by the government, particularly at its initial stage. This funding will need more than one-year cycle of funding and will require a stronger partnership between public and private partnership if the state funding will be leveraged effectively.

Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing of Albania is still in its infancy and in this regard Albania can be compared with neighboring countries in the region which offer various kinds of tourism packages. The main actions needed to be taken in the field of tourism marketing are:

- Coordination of marketing activities and actions for creating the image of the destination Albania.
- Encouragement for the support and cooperation of the private sector in promotional activities and participation in the formation of national policies and practices of tourism
- Representing the country in tourism fairs and exhibitions
- Production and distribution of brochures, videos and other materials and measures in the field of marketing (internet, etc.)
- Coordination with regional tourist offices
- Conducting research and market analysis
- Grant funds from government and industry as well as from international donors

Ecotourism, strength development

As defined by IUCN in 1996, ecotourism is responsibly traveling and visiting of environmental areas relatively undisturbed, in order to enjoy and admire nature (and every accompanying cultural element) that promotes preservation and has low negative impact while ensuring socio-economic inclusion on benefits of local population.

Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable - Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism that operates and takes place in a natural environment. Ecotourism can be defined differently as a trip to the natural environment which is generally required to respect and protect the environment and culture of the host country or region.

Ecotourism is mainly based on nature and culture - eco-tourism based on the natural environment, physical character, biological, and cultural. Preservation of natural and cultural resources is very important for the planning, development and management of ecotourism, while there are plenty of destinations that see their cultural element essential for ecotourism development.

Ecotourism is environmental educators - This element makes tourism distinguish from other forms of tourism. Education and knowledge sharing can affect the behavior of tourists and the community taking the best from each other and helps in long-term tourist activity sustainability in natural areas. One of the main goals of ecotourism is that tourists appreciate and learn about the natural environment, in order to advance the issues of its protection.

Ecotourism generates income for the local population - local community involvement brings benefits not only to the community but also improves the experience of tourists by sharing knowledge and information with the local community. Communities may include providing services, facilities, products and even tourist information. Ecotourism can generate revenue and to protect natural and cultural resources.

Factors affecting tourists' attraction

The main steps to be taken for development and attraction of tourists are as follows:

1. Meetings for rising awareness with residents;
2. Seminars for rising awareness and recognition of cultural background and tourist values of the area;
3. Organizing an advertising campaign of tourism facilities to attract tourists;
 - the preparation of leaflets,
 - banners or guiding signs along the way,
 - publicity in the social media and printed media,
 - preparation of video clips with views of the area,
 - presentation of clips at any fair where the Ministry of Tourism participates.
4. Improving tourism service quality, based on training organized by residents, mainly women, such as:
 - Traditional cooking
 - Hygienic conditions necessary for tourists
 - Traditional ways of lifestyle, creating in this way with great interest to tourists in the village livelihoods;
 - Establishing a craft bazaar, an artisan school.
5. Creating a tourism environmental association, which will serve as a bridge of communication with the city, providing transportation of tourists in specific areas of the city;
6. Preparation of a seasonal guide, which will guide residents in the village or persons responsible for taking care of tourists and organize them in various points around the area, and sailing on the lake;

CONCLUSIONS

- Vlora is one of the areas with touristic enormous potential
- The number of tourists has been increased starting from 170,000 tourists in 2005 to 350,000 tourists in 2008.
- In 2005, financial income from tourism was estimated at 5 million dollar, a figure which grew up gradually year by year reaching about 8 million dollar in 2008.
- Sustainable tourism is built on tourism's four key pillars which are:
 - Economic sustainability
 - Ecological sustainability
 - Cultural sustainability
 - Local and political sustainability

RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations consist on:

- Infrastructure development: development of land, water and air transport.
- Improving and establishing of efficient management systems and solid waste treatment, as well as water treatment systems.
- Guarantee of drinking water;
- Guarantee of electricity
- Attraction of investments.
- Development of Telecommunications and Internet
- Review and establishment of standards for the land design and for areas with potential tourism development.

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