



WPI

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Understanding the Potential Market for Culinary Tourism in Albania



RNNO Foundation

Understanding the Potential Market for Culinary Tourism in Albania

An Interactive Qualifying Project
submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Science

Submitted by:
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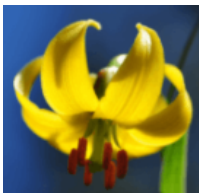
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Submitted to:

Nikolin Kola
The RRNO Foundation

Professor Robert Hersh
Professor Leslie Dodson
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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The RRNO Foundation



ABSTRACT



*Figure A: Albanian woman tending to her farm in a rural part of Albania
(Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook Page)*

Working with The RRNO Foundation in Albania, this project analyzed the interest among members of the Albanian diaspora to take part in culinary tourism in rural Albania. The team administered an online survey and conducted 13 in-depth interviews with members of the Albanian diaspora. Through these methods, we discovered there is high interest in RRNO's culinary tourism initiatives in the diaspora across generations, that RRNO's tourism initiatives also appeal to Albanians living in Albania, and that decisions to engage in culinary tourism for diaspora members are made as a family, rather than individual context. From these findings, we were able to help RRNO better understand which market segments to target and what culinary tourists are interested in when returning to Albania.

Acknowledgements

We first would like to thank Mr. Nikolin Kola, our sponsor, and co-founder of The RRNO Foundation, for his time, input, and trust in our group.

We would also like to thank Professor Hersh and Professor Dodson for their time, help, and commitment to our project.

Finally, we would like to thank the other RRNO teams, in particular the social media team, for helping us with many aspects of our project.

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Executive Summary	All		All
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The RRNO Foundation	Brooks		All
The Erosion of Culinary Traditions in Rural Areas	Malkowski	Brooks	All
Impacts of Emigration from Albania	Desjardins		All
Tourism, Why People Do it and what Inhibits Them	Brooks	Desjardins	All
Rural and Culinary Tourism in Albania	All		All
Methods			
Methods Introduction	All		All
Creation of our Survey, Interviews, and Family Profiles	Brooks	Malkowski	All
Identify Pre-Covid Tourism Practices of the Members of the Albanian Diaspora	Desjardins		All
Determine Constraints that may Limit Travel Opportunities for the Members of the Albanian Diaspora	Malkowski	Brooks	All
Assess the Appeal of Culinary Tourism to Members of the Albanian Diaspora	Brooks		All
Evaluate the Levels of Connection that Members of the Albanian Diaspora and their Families Have Towards Albania	Malkowski, Desjardins		All
Determine the Impact that Families Have on Travel Habits	Brooks	Desjardins	All

Analysis Strategies	Desjardins		All
Findings			All
Findings Context	All		All
Survey Demographics	Desjardins		All
Finding 1	Malkowski	Desjardins	All
Finding 2	Desjardins		All
Finding 3	Brooks		All
Finding 4	Desjardins	Brooks, Malkowski	All
Finding 5	Brooks	Desjardins	All
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Recommendation 2	Brooks		All
Recommendation 3	Brooks	Desjardins	All
Conclusion	Desjardins		All
Report Design	All		All

As you may notice, every section has the editor as “all”. Every section we wrote and every section we edited, we sat down as a group and worked together. For most of the project’s duration, we would meet, display our writing on a projection screen, and read every sentence together. We did this because our writing styles are different; this ensured that the voice used throughout the report was consistent.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

Culinary tourism involves food, cooking, and culinary tradition and can take many forms, such as cooking traditional foods and traveling to local farms (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2013). Culinary tourism can create new revenue streams for rural areas and help maintain local food systems, leading to a “distinctive local identity and marketable place image to outsiders” (UNIDO, 2017, p.39). Other forms of culinary tourism include cooking alongside locals, participating in homestays, and summer camps.

Recent policy initiatives in Albania have identified agritourism, a form of culinary tourism that focuses explicitly on farming and local nature, as a vehicle for rural development. The goals of these policies include funding agritourism enterprises and creating a network of traditional Albanian products in the stores of the region (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2018). There are other organizations working towards the same goals of sponsoring Albanian culinary tourism, one of which is our sponsor, the RRNO Foundation.



*Figure D: A small Albanian homestead in the Northern Albanian Alps
(Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook)*

Research Strategies



Figure E: Albanian women selling fresh produce
(Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook)

The goal of our project was to determine and analyze the interest among members of the Albanian diaspora in returning to Albania and surrounding countries to engage in culinary tourism activities. In addition, we tried to understand the ways in which members of the diaspora stay connected to Albanian culture. Our research also extended to young Albanian professionals located in both the United States and Albania and was designed to help RRNO re-evaluate its marketing efforts and include not only the 18-35 demographic, but also groups such as young families and multi-generational families.

To realize our goal, we identified the following objectives.

1. *Identify the pre-Covid tourism practices of members of the Albanian diaspora.*
2. *Determine the constraints that may limit travel opportunities for members of the Albanian diaspora.*
3. *Assess the appeal of culinary tourism to members of the Albanian diaspora.*
4. *Evaluate the levels of connection that members of the Albanian diaspora and their families have towards Albania.*
5. *Determine the impact that family dynamics have on travel habits.*

We created an online survey through Qualtrics, a WPI sponsored surveying and data collection software (all questions found in Appendix A). With a sample size of 34 participants, the survey collected a mass of numerical data which we were able to statistically analyze and portray the most important statistics relating to culinary tourism interest, cultural connection, and travel preference in 3 concise infographics (full size infographics found in Appendix D). To explore themes we identified from the survey, we interviewed 13

participants, from 1st to 3rd generation Albanian. These participants included members of the diaspora living in the U.S and young Albanian professionals in Albania. These interviews targeted families, which gave us a multigenerational perspective on such concepts as connection to Albania, travel preferences, and interest on RRNO's culinary tourism initiatives. From these analyses, we successfully created 3 family profiles and used a combination of survey and interview results to help RRNO understand characteristics of its market.

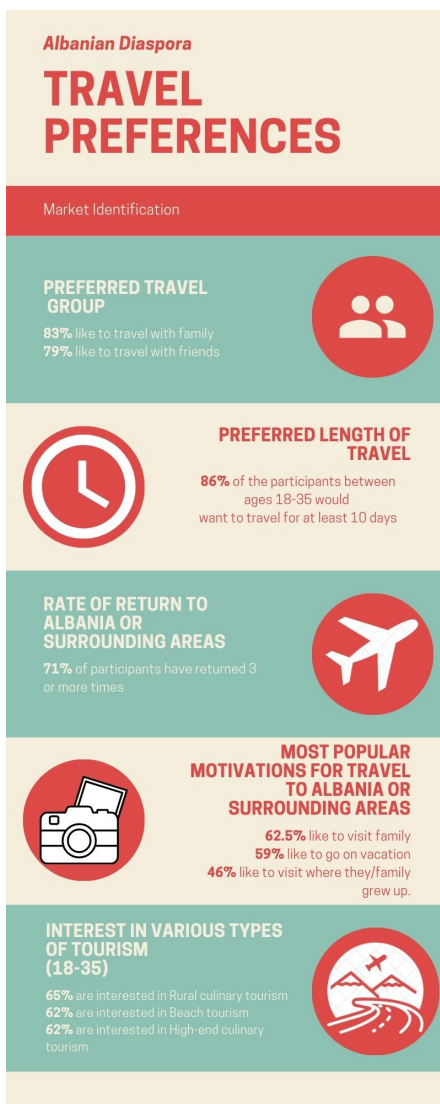


Figure F and G: Infographics showing Travel preferences and Cultural connection statistics

Findings

Our findings revolved around three central themes: members of the diaspora's reasoning for returning to Albania and the surrounding countries; connection to Albanian culture; and interest in culinary tourism.

Members of the Albanian diaspora are very interested in RRNO's tourism initiatives.

- There is considerable interest in cooking lessons from local grandmothers, homestays, and summer camps from all ages ranging from 18-80, but the highest interest was in cooking with local grandmothers.
- 11 out of 13 interview participants were interested in RRNO's tourism initiatives. These interviews showed there was a trend in interest among various ages and generations.

We found that 71% of both older (36 and older) and younger (18-35) generation members of the diaspora were interested in cooking with local grandmothers, homestays, and summer camps. Among these, the greatest interest was in cooking with local grandmothers with approximately 78% of survey participants expressing interest. Although there was not enough data to prove significance, we do see a trend that participants were very interested.

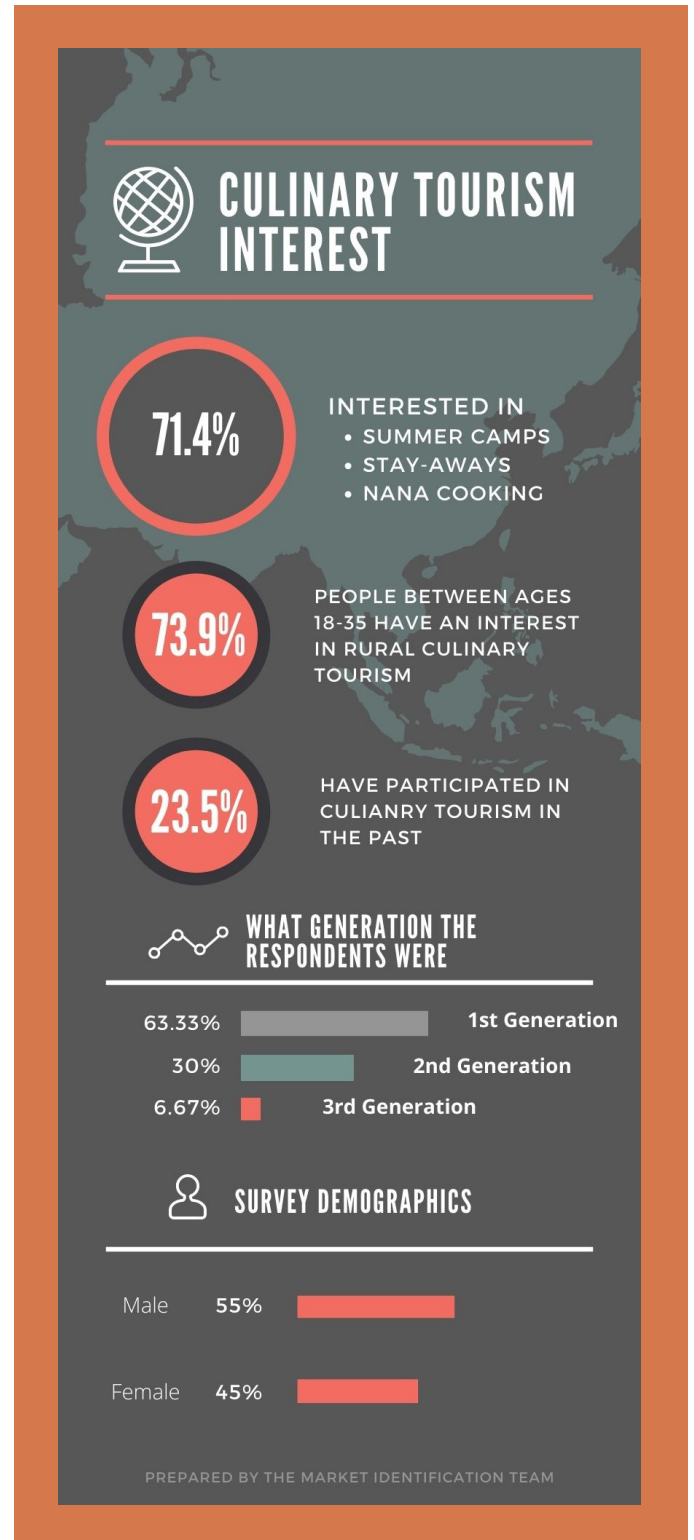


Figure H: Infographic showing survey interest in Culinary tourism

Younger members of the Albanian diaspora feel their connection to Albanian culture is eroding and believe there is more for them to learn about Albanian culinary traditions.

- Younger generations feel there is more to learn about recipes and techniques they have not experienced enough in their daily lives living away from Albania.
- Younger generations feel they can learn aspects about their culture from stories being told by parents and grandparents, but being immersed in the culture teaches more aspects that cannot be passed on through word of mouth.
- While analyzing the Miloshi and Martini family interviews, the younger generation (aged between 18 and 24) mentioned that they wanted to be more connected with Albania with regard to Albanian culinary traditions. In both cases, this disconnection derived from not being consistently surrounded by Albanian traditions while in the United States and drove a strong desire to pursue RRNO's tourism initiatives.

" I feel more connected to Albania than you would think I would, but there is a lot more for me to learn, most notably through language and food"

- Noel Christopher

As noted, only 34 people responded to our survey. This was not enough participation to draw statistically significant conclusions demonstrating differences in opinions between different demographics, but it laid the groundwork for our recommendations for how to improve the survey for the RRNO Foundation to use in the future. In this sense, our survey became a beta test for what the RRNO Foundation can use to identify the interest among a greater demographic and provided a foundation for future distributions of the survey.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation 1:

We recommend that RRNO expand its target demographic to contain all members of the Albanian diaspora in addition to young Albanian professionals living in Albania.

- Expand the target demographic to include first- and third-generation members of the diaspora as well as young Albanian professionals still living in Albania.
- Expand the target demographic beyond the 18-35 year old age range to include all ages and use the following age ranges in a revised survey to capture the motivations and constraints for different age groups: (18-25 young adults, 26-35 young parents, 36-45 parents, 46-55 older parents, 56-64 young grandparents, or 65-79 grandparents, 80+ older grandparents).

Recommendation 2:

We recommend that RRNO create programs that highlight the differences in cuisine between the different regions of Albania.

- RRNO should create itineraries that enable members of the diaspora to experience food practices, recipes, and culinary traditions from multiple regions in Albania.
- RRNO should develop programs to encourage group-based travel of members of the diaspora who could visit villages and regions and form lasting friendships through food.

Recommendation 3:

We recommend that RRNO expand its ideas of culinary tourism plans to include both nuclear and multi-generational extended families.

- Provide options for single-day tourism activities for families of young children.
- When considering group activities, focus on families as well as on groups comprised of similar-aged individuals from the diaspora.
- Our interview participants consistently stated that family played a large role in their connection to Albanian culture and culinary traditions and that they would like to experience culinary tourism along with their family.

Recommendation 4:

We recommend that RRNO use an updated survey that eliminates problems we discovered in the survey used in this project.

- Rework multiple-part questions into separate questions to avoid confusion and ensure the survey collects the data correctly.
- Make the demographic and branching questions required so that participants cannot skip to the very end without answering any questions.
- Make all numerical questions that have text inputs into other forms of responses such as sliders, Likert scales, or semantic differential scales.
- Ensure that all possible responses for each question are clear, concise, and specific so participants understand each option and it fully explains RRNO's ideas.

Our redesigned survey can be found in Appendix E with all of these changes included.

The RRNO Foundation and our sponsor, Nikolin Kola, wanted to know more about the current interest in culinary tourism among second-generation members of the Albanian diaspora. Through our survey results, interviews, and family profiles, we learned that RRNO's initiatives resonate with members of the Albanian diaspora. For many, culinary tourism is a means to revisit memories of family life in Albania. For others, food is way share those memories across generations. Food not only deepens people's connection to Albania, but learning how to cook a family recipe in a village is something many of our respondents want to experience.

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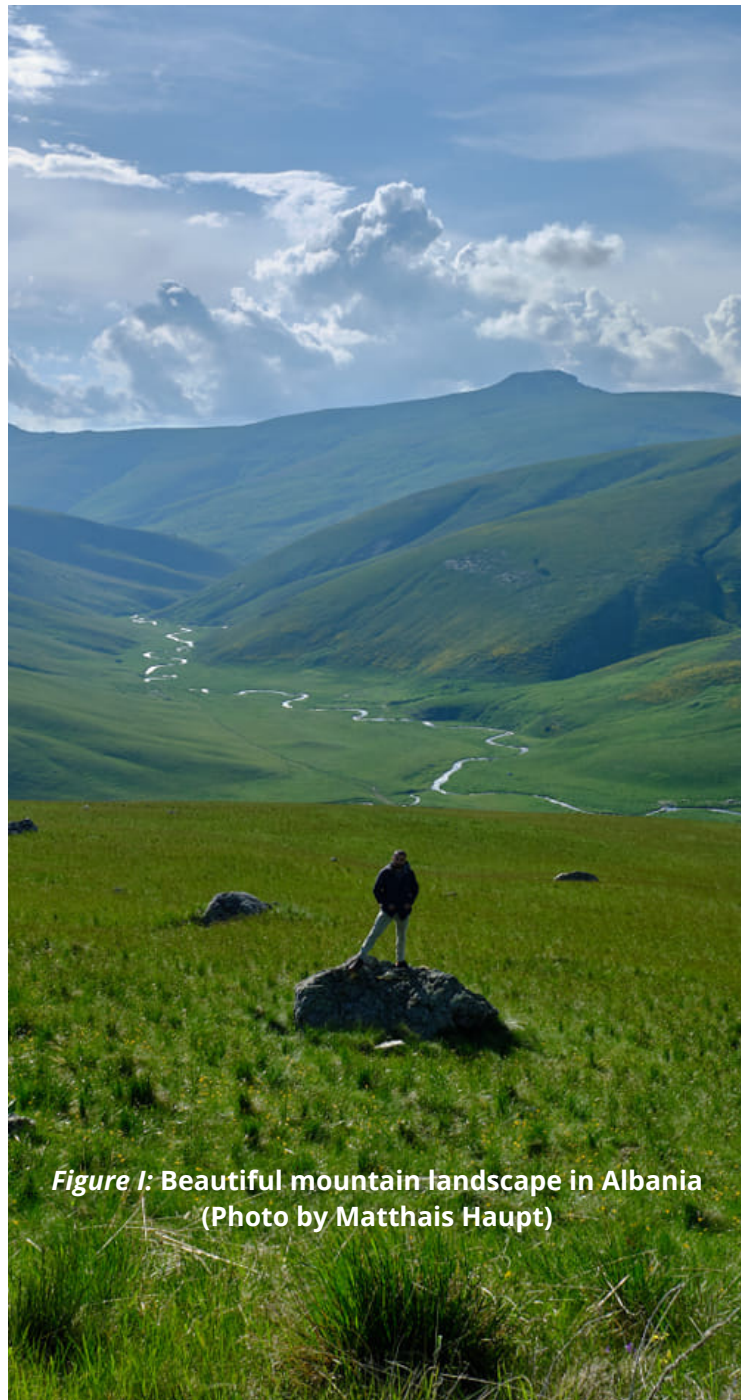
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*Figure 1: Beautiful mountain landscape in Albania
(Photo by Matthais Haupt)*

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The image shows several long, slender peppers, known as 'speca', hanging from a rack. The peppers are in various stages of ripening, with some being bright green, others transitioning to red, and some appearing dried and wrinkled. The background is a blurred view of a drying rack filled with many more peppers, suggesting a large-scale drying process. A green rectangular overlay with rounded corners is positioned in the center of the image, containing the word 'INTRODUCTION' in white, bold, uppercase letters with a black outline.

INTRODUCTION

*Figure 1.1: Albanian 'speca' being dried
(photo from Matthias Haupt)*



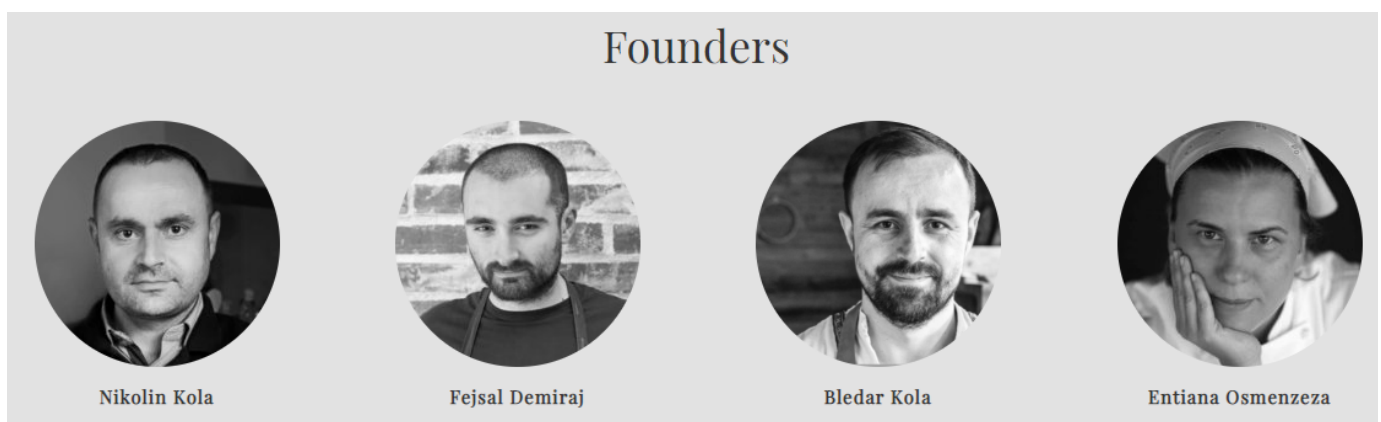
**Figure 1.2: Freshly picked fruit being prepared for a traditional Albanian dish
(Photo from RRNO Facebook Page)**

Culinary tourism involves food, cooking, and culinary traditions and can take many forms, such as cooking traditional foods and traveling to local farms (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2013). Culinary tourism can create new revenue streams for rural areas and help maintain local food systems, leading to a “distinctive local identity and marketable place image to outsiders,” (UNIDO, 2017 p. 39).

Recent policy initiatives in Albania have identified agritourism, a form of culinary tourism that focuses explicitly on farming and local nature, as a vehicle for rural development. The goals of these policies include funding agritourism enterprises and creating a network of traditional Albanian products in the stores of the region (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2018). There are other organizations working towards the same goals of sponsoring Albanian culinary tourism, one of which is our sponsor, the RRNO Foundation.

The RRNO Foundation is an Albanian nonprofit organization that focuses on the preservation of Albanian gastronomy and culinary traditions. In 2019, RRNO visited 365 villages in Albania and in neighboring countries with large Albanian populations to document traditional cooking techniques and to collect little known recipes. As part of its mission, RRNO would like to encourage members of the Albanian diaspora to visit Albania and reconnect with the country's diverse culinary traditions. RRNO would like to better understand its potential customer base both within Albania and in the Albanian diaspora in the United States. In addition, it would like to better understand the motivations and willingness of members of the Albanian diaspora to travel to Albania to take part in culinary tourism and learn more about their own culture.

The goal of our project was to determine and analyze the interest among members of the Albanian diaspora in traveling to Albania and surrounding countries to engage in culinary tourism activities. We explored what attracts and what dissuades members of the Albanian diaspora from participating in rural culinary tourism and attempted to understand the degree to which familial relations can drive culinary tourism. Through interviews and a survey, we investigated the current tourism practices of members of the Albanian diaspora, their activity preferences, interest in food-related travel, and the factors (such as cost and time) inhibiting travel to Albania. We expect our analysis will help RRNO better understand and develop strategies to appeal to various customer segments of the Albanian diaspora, as well as among young Albanian professionals living in the country.



**Figure 1.3: Founders of the RRNO Foundation
(Screenshot from rrno.al)**



BACKGROUND

Figure 2.1: Kadri Karavidaj, with his cow Busha in Mazrek, Tirana, Albania (Photo from Jeton Jagxhiu)

The RRNO Foundation

RRNO's Mission

RRNO (meaning “to live on” in Albanian) is a nonprofit organization started by chefs looking to promote Albania's cultural heritage and history by means of gastronomy. Its slogan, “për më gatue” (meaning “to cook for me”) demonstrates the organization’s value of preserving, developing, and promoting Albanian cuisine worldwide. RRNO’s efforts address a set of problems facing Albania: the erosion of culinary traditions, the lack of economic opportunities in rural areas in Albania, and the difficulties that local food producers face competing with lower-cost food imports.



Figure 2.3: Fresh Pasta being made
(Photo from RRNO's Facebook Page)

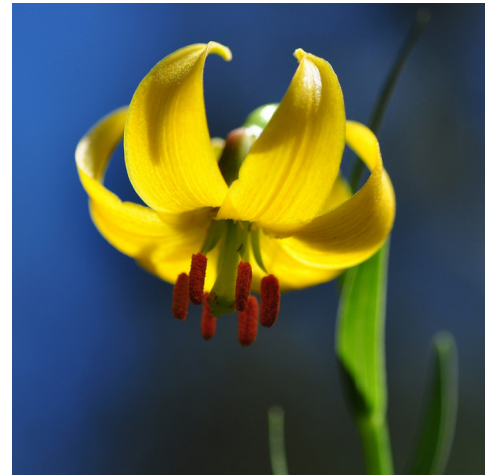


Figure 2.2: RRNO's logo: *Lilium albanicum*
(Photo from RRNO's Facebook Page)

RRNO was also founded to encourage Albanians in the diaspora to rediscover their roots, to infuse culinary traditions with new ideas, and to create vibrant rural tourism that features food, cultural heritage, adventure, and more (RRNO, 2018). The organization was founded by Mr. Nikolin Kola, and three Albanian chefs: Bledar Kola, Fejsal Demiraj, and Entiana Osmenzeza to maintain culinary traditions in Albania (RRNO, 2018).

RRNO's Gastronomic Expedition

In 2019, Mr. Nikolin Kola, his brother, Bledar, Fejsal, and a professional photographer set out on an extensive gastronomic expedition, travelling 16,500 kilometers in 70 days, visiting 365 rural villages around Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. Gastronomy is defined as the art of pursuing and cooking food, while culinary tourism is a form of tourism that chiefly takes food into account when deciding where to travel and what activities to pursue (Santich, 2004). During this culinary expedition, the group explored hundreds of rural villages and homesteads that had unique gastronomic traditions. During this expedition, they came to understand that the culinary traditions in Albanian families are primarily maintained and practiced by the grandmothers of the region that are well-versed in traditional Albanian cuisine.

RRNO realizes the need to maintain culinary traditions and pass them onto members of the Albanian diaspora as it will fulfill the organization's goal of strengthening the relationship between the Albanian diaspora and Albanian

culture. RRNO's focus on rural culinary tourism stands in contrast to the bulk of tourism activity in the country. Albania is well known for its sandy beaches and beautiful coastal areas; however the rural parts of the country are much less frequented by tourists (Tourism in Figures, 2019). The expedition convinced RRNO that the hospitality it experienced in village after village, the quality of the ingredients used in recipes, the beauty of the rural landscapes, and the traditional foods they ate in the local guesthouses could attract members of the Albanian diaspora who were interested in exploring their roots.



Figure 2.4: An Albanian grandmother kneading dough for a traditional meal (Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook Page)

The Erosion of Culinary Traditions in Rural Areas

Collectivization During the Regime



Figure 2.5: Collectivist farming in Albania
(Photo saved to Pinterest by user joaofreitas0911)

RRNO's mission to preserve, develop, and promote Albanian gastronomy seeks to redress the damage done to family-based farming systems and traditional foods by the agricultural policy of collectivization implemented by the communist regime that ruled the country from after World War II until 1991. Through collectivization, the regime divided almost half of all land in Albania and gave it to the military with villages receiving the rest (Zhllima et al., 2013). This distribution system significantly impacted the ability of families to farm their own land. Each household was allotted 1100 square meters of land and a small number of animals, and very often the regime took these animals to form collective herds. The government considered all land, even private land, a "collective property of the people". The 1976 constitution decreed that all land was owned by the state and no sale of personal product and crops was allowed, a ruling that undermined small, family-owned farms. (Zhllima et al., 2013).

Rural Emigration and the loss of culinary traditions

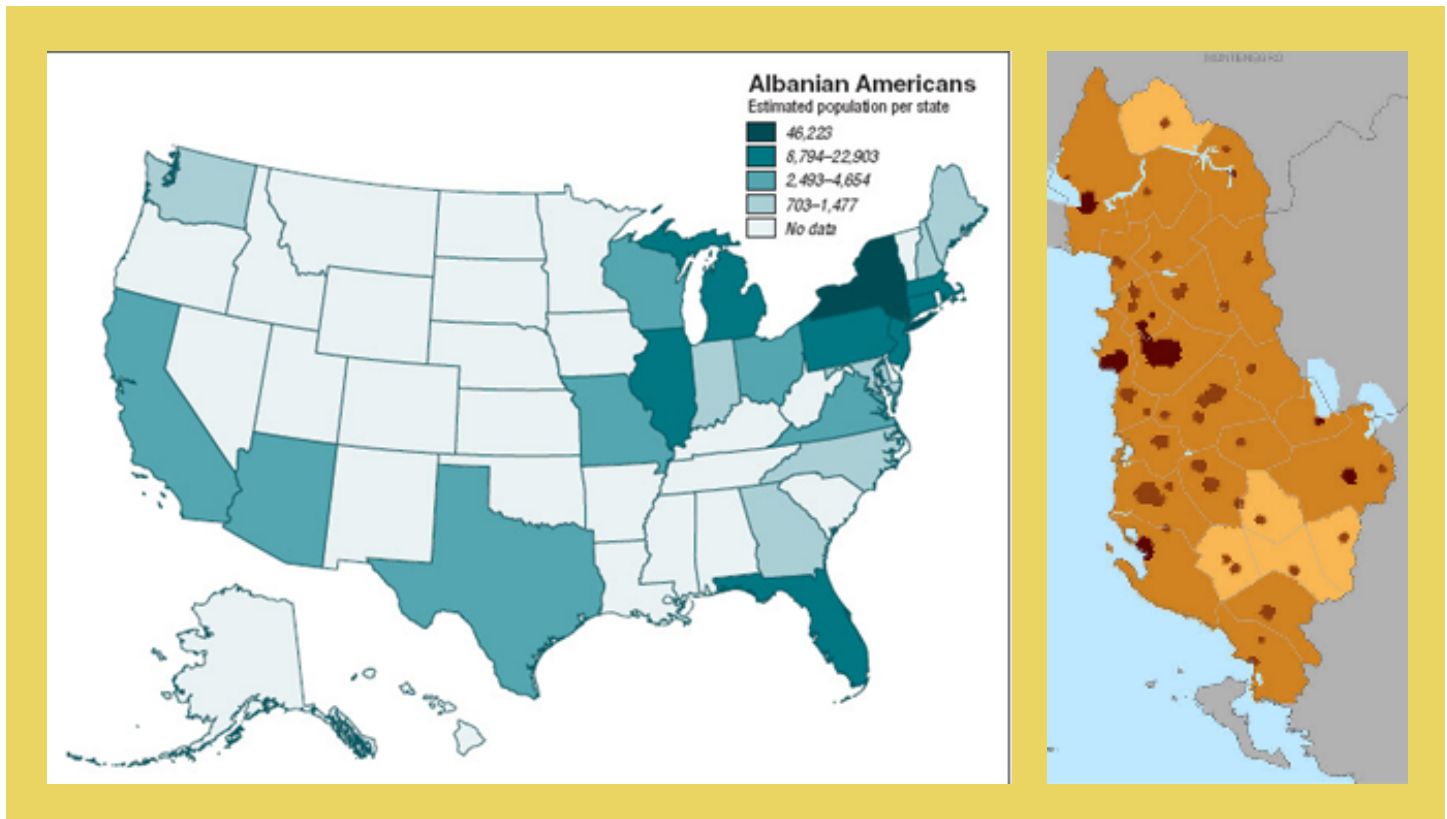


Figure 2.6: Map showing the location of Albanian diaspora in the United States, categorized by state (Retrieved from Cengage Learning, 2006-2010)

Figure 2.7: Map of urban population density in Albania in 2000. Darkest brown is the highest density (>1000 Inhabitants per km2) and lightest brown is the lowest (1-5 Inhabitants per km2) (Retrieved from SEDACMaps.)

While collectivization affected family farms and cooking traditions during the regime, widespread emigration from rural areas in Albania to urban areas and abroad has also eroded culinary traditions. In the decade between 1990-2000, an estimated 800,000 people left Albania (Jurgens, 2014). A majority of these sought work in the agricultural and construction fields in nearby countries such as Italy, Greece, and Serbia.

Those who had a high level of education, primarily from the larger cities in Albania, moved to Europe and the United States.

Data from a study done in 2009-2011 stated the largest populations of Albanians and people of Albanian descent reside in New York and Michigan (Figure 2.6). Massachusetts, California, and Illinois are also home to large populations of the Albanian diaspora.

Impacts of Emigration from Albania

Cultural Loss and Transition

In the wake of the mass migration that occurred after the fall of the communist regime, hundreds of thousands of Albanians became immersed in cultures foreign to their own. To varying degrees, members of the diaspora, while holding on to some of their Albanian traditions, embraced the opportunities and norms of the receiving societies, a process called acculturation (Lahey, 2003). Acculturation most commonly results in a blur of cultural boundaries, but there are also instances in which boundary crossing, as well as boundary transvaluation (a form of cultural re-evaluation) occur. Boundary transvaluation occurs when one's culture both changes and remains the same when moving to a new country. This re-evaluation of culture often occurs when younger generations embrace different values than those of their parents, such as rejecting notions of sexism or arranged marriages.

Boundary blurring involves the mixing of cultures similar to each other, as well as the maintenance of certain aspects of the original culture (Kosta, 2018). Similar to boundary transvaluation, boundary blurring involves change in culture, however the influences that cause the two changes are different. Boundary blurring is influenced by the new culture, whereas boundary transvaluation is independent of the new culture and instead relies on a reassessment of a group's original cultural values after being removed from this culture. Scholars note that boundary crossing is one of the largest changes that an immigrant can undergo in terms of acculturation and occurs when one completely sheds their own cultural heritage to embrace the culture of their new home. Boundary crossing is less likely to be an immediate form of acculturation, but rather an eventual cultural transference over time (Kosta 2018).

This acculturation can be seen in the results of a 2018 survey given to members of the Albanian diaspora residing in Italy. While the respondents stated overwhelmingly that they felt that they were Albanians and not Italians, they did embrace parts of Italian culture in their daily lives. The respondents were equally as likely to have Albanian and Italian food regularly, and many participants watched both Albanian and Italian television while at home. There were also instances where Italian culture dominated Albanian culture; when asked about their opinions on five different Albanian foods as compared to five different Italian foods, the members of the diaspora living in Italy were more likely to know all five Italian foods, with all of them being known by 96% or more of the respondents, while the knowledge of Albanian foods were slightly less. In addition, members of the Albanian diaspora in Italy liked most of the analyzed Italian foods more as compared to the traditional Albanian foods (Brokaj & Brokaj, 2018).

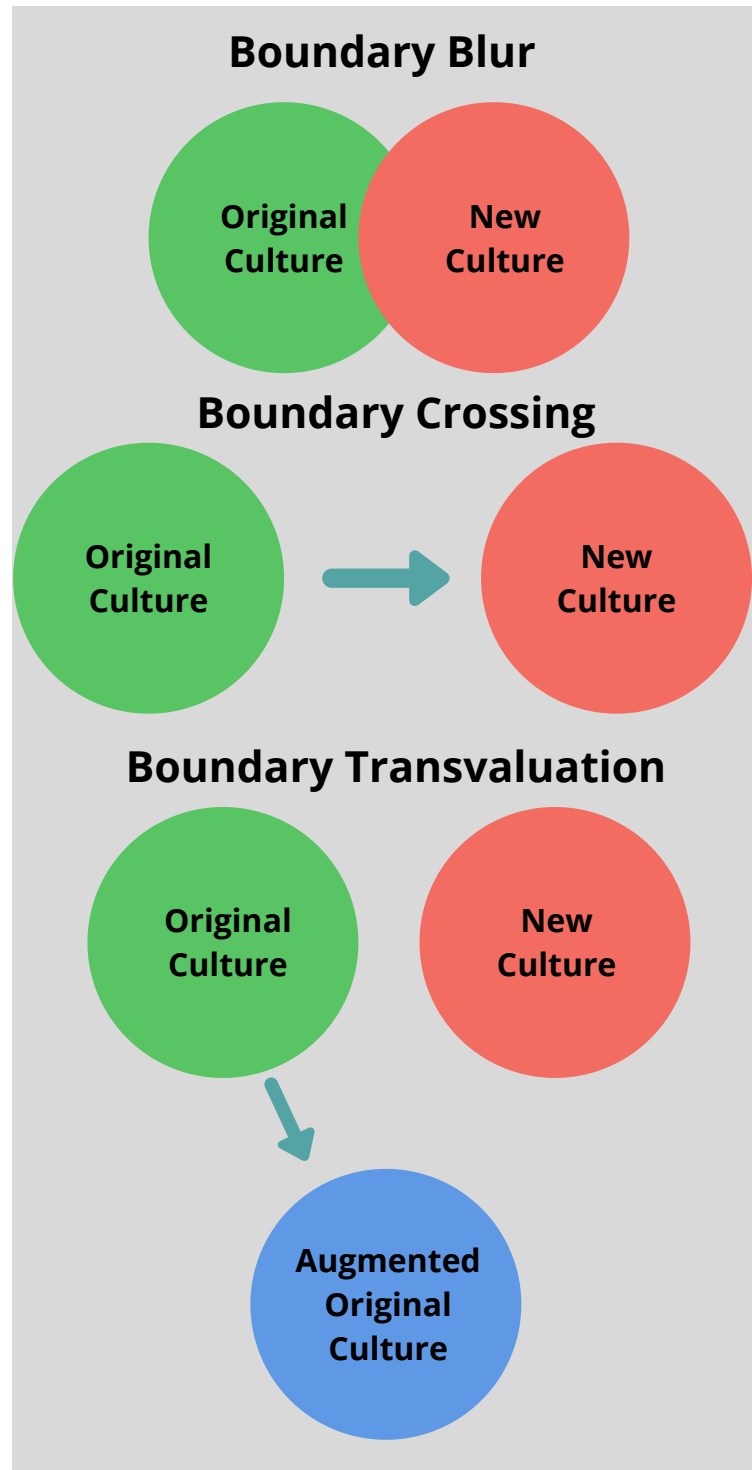


Figure 2.8: Graphic showing the difference between Boundary blur, Boundary crossing, and Boundary Transvaluation

Ethnic Affinity and Boundary Blurring



Figure 2.9: Gurra Cafe, an Albanian restaurant on Arthur Ave, specializing in Kosovan cuisine (Photo from foodperestroika.com)

A mixture of ethnic affinity, the idea of moving to a place with a culture that feels familiar to one's original culture, and boundary blurring are present in many immigrant communities (Rothe et al., 2010). One such community is in the Bronx in New York City. On a street named Arthur Avenue, the original population was largely Italian immigrants. Over time, due to common cultural traditions shared by Albanians and Italians, Albanian immigrants moved to Arthur Avenue and became assimilated with the Italian culture there.

Italian-American culture provided a way for new Albanian immigrants to make a living in the United States; in becoming more immersed in Italian-American culture, Albanian immigrants were able to gain the skills necessary to work in the Italian businesses located on Arthur Avenue. This led to the boundary blurring phenomenon occurring, which led to a mix between Albanian and Italian culture. Upon visiting Arthur Avenue today, one can see Albanian-Americans owning and running Albanian and Italian businesses alike (Kosta, 2018).

The Importance of Family in Cultural Maintenance

A central part of maintaining culture is the presence of family that upholds traditions such as holidays, family gatherings, and cuisine. A 2009 UNESCO study noted that familial bonds are strong, and families will often maintain contact regardless of the distance they are separated from each other (UNESCO, 2009).

As well as promoting the maintenance of culture within a household, family deliberations impact travel and tourism destinations. In a 2015 study, researchers found that approximately 37% of respondents were planning to take a family trip with multiple generations.

In addition, they found that as longevity increases worldwide, healthier grandparents are becoming more willing to travel further distances with their grandchildren. In the case of immigrant families, these grandparents most typically brought their family back to their home country to introduce the younger generations to where they came from. Many families also showed signs that taking these vacations to learn more about their cultural roots served as a means of strengthening their familial bonds (Schänzel and Yeoman, 2015).



Figure 2.10: Multigenerational Albanian family carrying on traditional Albanian recipes in Gjakova, Kosovo (Photo from [albanina.expedition](#) Facebook page)

Tourism, Why People do it and What Inhibits Them

Culinary Tourism



Figure 2.11: Young Albanians tasting wine, a common form of culinary tourism (Photo from RRNO Facebook page)

A central part of maintaining one's culture is food, and culinary tourism allows the traveler to learn more about the food and culinary traditions of the local area. Culinary tourism is defined as tourism in which food takes a principal role in both the reason for traveling, as well as the activities that are pursued during travel (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2013). Author Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that culinary tourism includes core activities such as wineries, food festivals, and cooking schools (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2013).

In contrast, the Australian journal *Tourism Management* argues that culinary tourism is a product of the destination's food's authenticity, culture, management, and marketing (Ellis et al., 2018). While these are two separate outlooks, they are similar in the way that they argue the destination is what drives attraction to culinary tourism.

Culinary activities drive attraction to a destination and have gained a reputation of niche tourism.

Niche tourism is a form of tourism that is very appealing to a distinct portion of potential travelers; in the case of culinary tourism, this niche is people that are connected to the local cuisine of the area they travel to. Several countries have realized that they can increase tourism rates by simply promoting their cuisine in various ways (Karim et al., 2010).

Relationship Between Food and Cultural Identity

Food can have very strong meanings and link people to their origin and memories from their life. It is very common for people to link foods to their childhoods that reminds them of special memories they had as a child. It can be a strong bonding factor within families, as food is a large component of many holiday traditions. One example of this is from a study done by a student at the University of Tampa who traveled to Italy to study food and cultural identity.



Figure 2.12: A group dining together at Mullixhiu, an Albanian Restaurant in Tirana (Photo from RRNO Facebook page)

The researcher, Gina Almerico, states that an Italian family she spoke with explained how Sunday dinners were something very important to them. In combination with her prior research, Almerico considered how the family's heritage, handed down through the food on their plates, signified who the family became. These dinners reminded the family of coming together with relatives to share memories and conversations. To them, a bowl of warm spaghetti in the middle of the table brings happy memories of their childhood and younger days (Almerico, 2014).

Why Travel?

A study done by Yun in 2011 analyzed tourist behaviors towards the opportunities of food related activities in their travel destinations. The goal of Yun's study was to categorize travelers into groups based on their motivations when travelling. Yun categorized the tourists into four different categories: deliberate, opportunistic, accidental, and uninterested culinary tourists. Deliberate culinary tourists are those motivated by culinary activities to visit a specific place and partake in culinary activities while traveling. Opportunistic culinary tourists are those who take part in culinary activities, but it was not their motivation for travel. Accidental culinary tourists are those who took part in culinary activities, but by chance and were not actively searching for culinary activities. Finally, uninterested culinary tourists are those who do not participate in culinary activities (Yun et al., 2011).

Deliberate Culinary Tourists

Motivated primarily by culinary tourism to travel

Opportunistic Culinary Tourists

Partake in culinary tourism but not as a motivation

Accidental Culinary Tourists

Partake in culinary tourism by chance

Uninterested Culinary Tourists

Not interested in culinary tourism

Figure 2.13: Figure showing 4 groups of culinary tourists derived from a study done by Yun in 2011

Inhibitions to Travel



Figure 2.14: Rosafa Castle in Shkodër, Albania - A landscape including cliffs, rivers, and mountainous terrain (Photo from RRNO Facebook Page)

Even if a person wants to travel, they may not be able to due to time and money restrictions. For example, it is easier for members of the Albanian diaspora living in Europe to return to Albania than those in the United States due to closer proximity and less expensive forms of travels such as trains and private vehicles (Cook et al., 2017).

As a final consideration, the infrastructure and landscape of the destination play a large part in their decision to travel (Rittichainuwat et al, 2007). Albania's landscape is very diverse, including beaches, plains, and mountains in addition to urban areas. The villages situated in the mountainous region of the country are more difficult to get to, which may intimidate people to travel there.

Rural and Culinary Tourism in Albania

Competition with Rural tourism from 'Sun and Beach' Tourism in Albania

In Albania, culinary tourism competes with other forms of tourism, such as urban and sun and beach tourism. These are the most popular types of tourism in recent years, especially in relation to the younger generations. The total proportion of foreign visitors that pursue rural tourism has slightly increased over the years from about 11% in 2014 to about 16.5% in 2018. Albanian tourism in general has also increased from about 3.7 million visitors in 2014 to about 5.9 million visitors in 2018, resulting in 407,000 rural travelers in 2014 and 974,000 rural travelers in 2018 (Tourism in Figures, 2019).

A breakdown of the tourism habits is shown in Figure 2.16 on the preceding page. Travel agencies situated in Albania tend to emphasize the beauty of sun and beach tourism while neglecting rural culinary tourism. On the National Albanian Tourist Agency's 'Where to go' page, less than one third of their recommended destinations focus on tourism in the rural areas of the country; the vast majority focus on coastal and urban tourism (National Albanian Tourist Agency, 2019). Only one of these categories focuses on gastronomy, putting a lower emphasis on it as compared to sun and beach tourism.



**Figure 2.15: Graph showing popularity of various tourist attractions in Albania
Made in Excel (Data retrieved from Tourism in Figures, 2019)**

Rural Tourism and its Effects on Albania

Rural tourism, although less popular than sun and beach tourism, also plays an important role in the economy of Albania. Recent policy initiatives have identified agritourism, a form of culinary tourism that focuses explicitly on farming and local nature, as a means of economic growth and has sponsored projects such as the 100 Villages Program (Besra, 2018). The goals of this program include creating funds for agritourism enterprises, guest houses, and creating a network of traditional Albanian products in the stores in the region (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2018). Another organization seeking to expand rural tourism in Albania is GIZ, a German development agency. One of the goals of this organization in Albania is to increase agriculture, employment in rural areas, and rural tourism through grants. GIZ provides vocational training containing the option for catering training not only to decrease unemployment, but to increase interest in a culinary field (GIZ, 2019).



Figure 2.16: Shepard in Xhepcisht, North Macedonia herds his sheep up a hillside (Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook)

In addition, other companies such as UNESCO focus on cultural tours of the country. In these tours, they allow for a group of people with Albanian heritage to explore the country and perform activities such as visiting ruins, national parks, and cities throughout the country (Smart Tour Albania, 2020). On top of cultural tours, groups offer food tours such as street food tasting, historical tours with the addition of wine tasting, and full day trips around the country with the addition of a traditional lunch and dinner (Top Albania, n.d.).

A top-down view of a white woven sack filled with golden-brown wheat grains. The grains are densely packed and have a slightly irregular, elongated shape. A purple rectangular overlay with rounded corners is centered over the middle of the sack, containing the word 'METHODS' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters with a black outline.

METHODS

*Figure 3.1: A freshly harvested sack of "Thekna" from Hoçë
(Photo from Jeton Jagxhiu)*

The goal of our project was to determine and analyze the interest among members of the Albanian diaspora in returning to Albania and surrounding countries to engage in culinary tourism activities. In addition, we tried to understand the ways in which members of the diaspora stay connected to Albanian culture. Our research also extended to young Albanian professionals located in both the United States and Albania and was designed to help RRNO re-evaluate its marketing efforts and include not only the 18-35 demographic, but also groups such as young families and multi-generational families. To realize our goal, we identified the following objectives shown in Figure 3.2.

The relationship between our goal, objectives, and the task of our project can be found in Figure 3.3 on the following page.

OBJECTIVES

1

Identify the pre-Covid tourism practices of members of the Albanian diaspora

2

Determine the constraints that may limit travel opportunities for members of the Albanian diaspora

3

Assess the appeal of culinary tourism to members of the Albanian diaspora

4

Evaluate the levels of connection that members of the Albanian diaspora and their families have towards Albania

5

Determine the impact that family has on travel habits

Figure 3.2: Project objectives

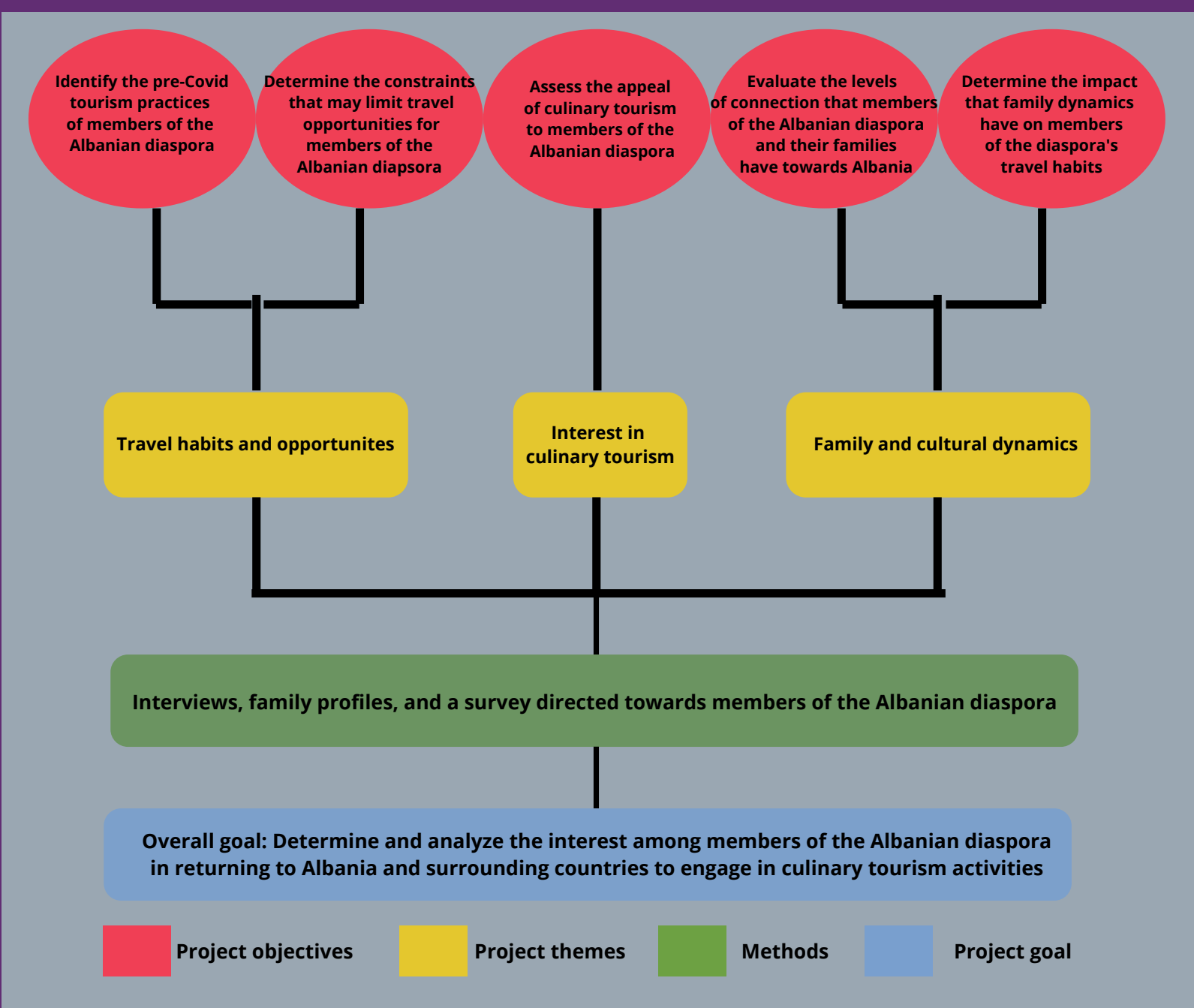


Figure 3.3: Figure showing the relationship between project objectives, themes, and the main goal of our project

Creation of our Surveys, Interviews, and Family Profiles

Determining our Target Audience

We expanded our target audience to a much wider range of the diaspora beyond RRNO's original interest in pursuing an 18-35 year-old demographic. While we focused on understanding the behaviors and interests of those in the 18-35 age range, we also included members of the diaspora that are older than 35 to establish a multigenerational perspective, as family has a large influence in travel habits (McCreedy et al. n.d). We targeted parents in our family profiles in order to better understand the role families play in deciding on tourist destinations and activities. Over the course of our research, it became apparent that first-generation Albanian professionals were interested in RRNO's travel ideas, and we included them in our research as well.

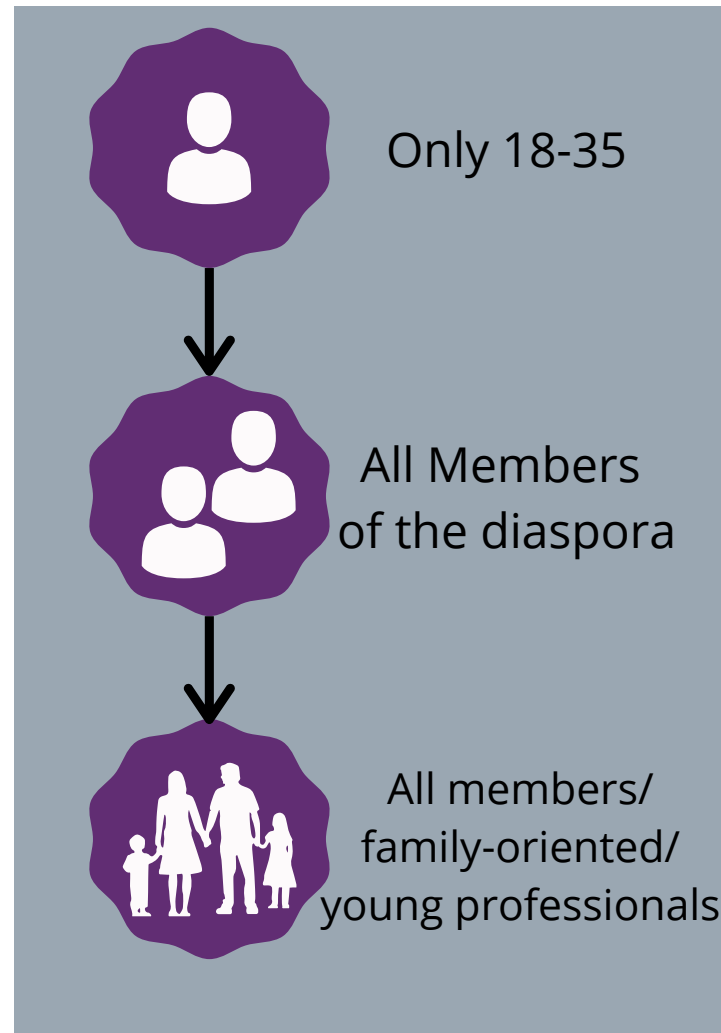


Figure 3.4: Figure showing the development of our target audience

Creation of our Surveys, Interviews, and Family Profiles

Survey Design and Sampling Strategy

We designed an online survey covering all objectives of our project through Qualtrics, a WPI sponsored surveying and data collection software. (See Appendix A for survey questions). The survey went through numerous iterations to ensure that the questions were clear and that they addressed the issues we sought to understand.

Survey response rates are typically very low and this was very evident at the beginning of the project (Schonau et al., 2002). Initially, we tried personally reaching out to people to distribute our survey through email and tried to reach as many Albanian community organizations as we could. This proved to be unsuccessful. In order to increase response rate, we collaborated with another one of the WPI Albanian Project Center groups, the RRNO Social Media team, to get its help to distribute the survey. Much of its research efforts focused on effective social media strategies to gain activity on social media posts (comments, likes, shares, etc.) and we used its knowledge to expand our survey network and gain more responses.



Figure 3.5: Initial survey post on the official RRNO Facebook page (posted November 11, 2020 on facebook.com/rrno.al)

We worked with the social media team to decide what should be part of the social media posts to gain the most interest from RRNO's social media followers. In addition, the RRNO Social Media team assisted us by posting every two days to the RRNO Facebook page to remind followers of the survey and encouraged them to participate. In return for assisting us, they used our survey responses for their own purposes.

For our first step, we created an initial Facebook post for the RRNO Facebook page in order to distribute the survey to RRNO's social media followers (as seen in Figure 3.5).

Creation of our Surveys, Interviews, and Family Profiles

The initial post contained a succinct introduction that used various social media strategies to target a wide range of participants. These strategies consisted of personal elements, personal questions, a photo, and the “call to action” strategy, which directly asks a viewer to do a task (in this case, participate in and share the survey). This post was shared by various Albanian organizations including the Massachusetts Albanian American Society (MAASBESA).

The post was also shared to multiple community pages, including Shqiptaret ne Gjermani (Albanians in Germany), Albanians in New York City, and Albanians al Market. In addition, Deni Hoxha, the founder of the Team Albanians Facebook page, disseminated the survey to his following of over 50,000 people.

To avoid confusion, we formatted the survey so that it had branches for different age groups, as well as branches for participants who did and didn't have children. Participants were asked to self-identify into one of the following four categories: 18-35 without children, 18-35 with children, 36 and older without children, and 36 and older with children.

Key Informant Interviews



Deni Hoxha

A current senior at Harvard University and is a first-generation member of the Albanian diaspora and has lived in Massachusetts since he was 11. During his time in Albania, he went to school in Tirana. He is the founder of Team Albanians, a group focused on showcasing Albanian culture via social media with tens of thousands of followers.

With the branched format, the Qualtrics program directed participants to different questions depending on their response to this question. Within these branches, the differences in questions between the various selections explored generational differences and ideas relating to familial influence on travel.

We asked each participant to select an age range and indicate if they have children. Depending on their response to the question posed in Figure 3.6, the survey branched into three different paths as shown with the flow diagram in Figure 3.7.

In order to understand participants' attitudes towards RRNO's tourism strategies, we also included tourism scenarios within our survey. These scenarios included culinary tourism situations proposed by our sponsor such as cooking with locals, participating in homestays, and participating in summer camps.

A homeaway is an activity where a participant lives with a host family and experiences what they do in their daily lives such as preparing and eating food or tending a farm. We asked the survey participants to rank on a Likert scale how interested they would be in participating in these activities in the future. The scenarios we used can be found in Figure 4.10.

It was important for us to respect the privacy of those that we surveyed, and we did not want to be invasive. We stated at the beginning on the survey that providing your name and email is optional and not mandatory so that we can maintain anonymity if participants preferred.

Please choose your age range and whether you have children.

- 18-35, no children
- 18-35, have children
- 36 or older, no children
- 36 or older, have children

Figure 3.6: Screenshot of branching question in the survey

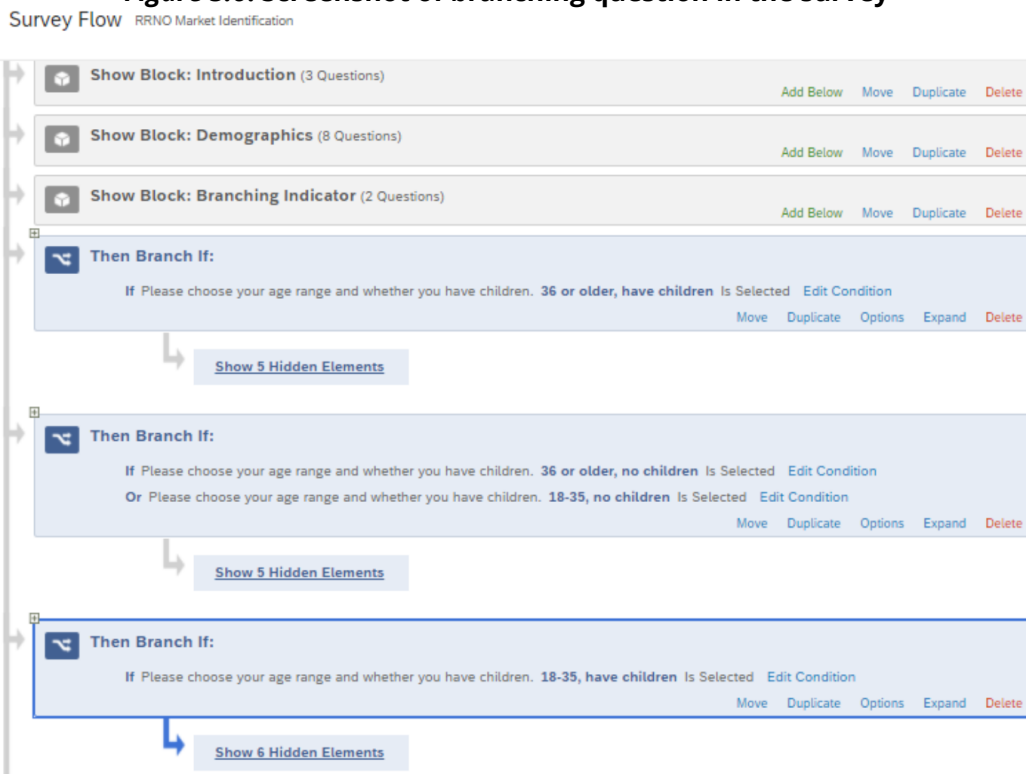


Figure 3.7: Screenshot of survey branching format

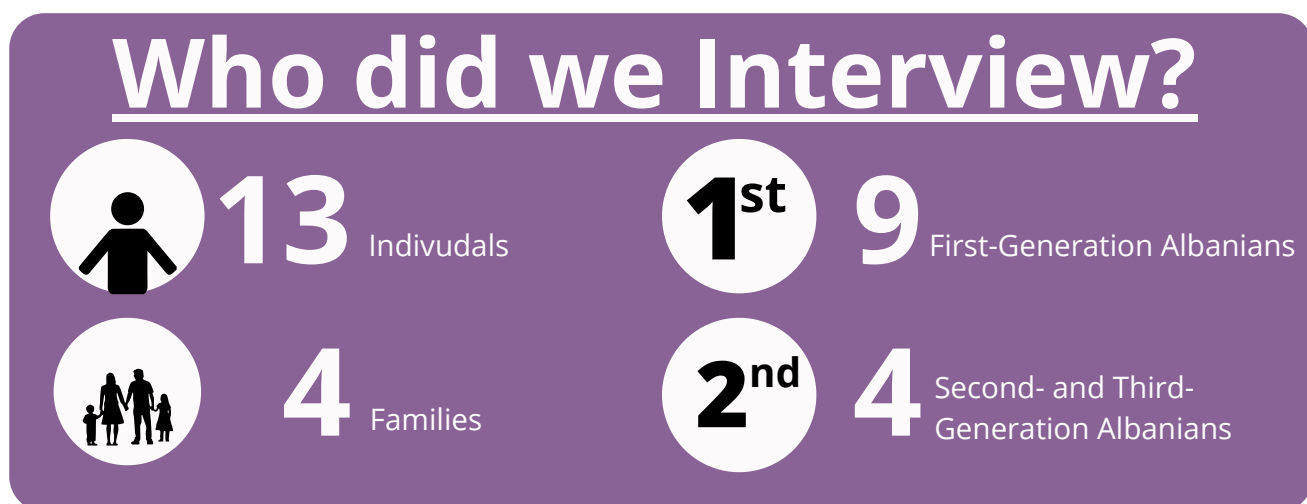
Creation of our Surveys, Interviews, and Family Profiles

Interview Design and Purpose

We used our survey to obtain primarily quantitative data about members of the Albanian diaspora. We turned to interviews to delve deeper into ideas related to generational differences in the connection to Albania and thoughts about travel. These interviews took place over zoom, as COVID-19 restrictions prevented us from meeting in person. The interviews were recorded to enable us to look back and create transcripts from them. The participants in these interviews were initially members of the diaspora that we knew.

We used these initial interviews not only to expand our network and discover families to interview, but also to help test our interview questions to see if revisions needed to be made. When we had our final interview questions confirmed, we reached out to families to set up interviews for our family profiles. These final interviews mostly focused on building our family profiles as well as exploring other perspectives on our survey questions. After every interview, we made an effort to find more families to interview.

We employed a snowball sampling strategy. We primarily focused on finding families to interview, but we also interviewed individuals to expand our survey participant network, as well as gain perspectives that we thought would aid RRNO's marketing strategy.



A majority of the people we spoke with in the individual interviews were first generation Albanians living in the U.S. We also interviewed young Albanian professionals. Although they were not our primary audience, we did this to not only expand our network, but to understand a perspective that RRNO had not considered. After every interview we completed, we created transcripts which we used to look back and write down what we missed in our notes. We used the transcripts to create family profiles as well as compare them to our survey and interview responses.

In total, we contacted 14 people by email, and interviewed 13 of those 14 people. All of these people live in the U.S, except for one person living in Albania. Some other potential participants had interest in interviews, but were unable to meet with us due to time constraints. We interviewed 3 families: one family made up of 3 first generation Albanian women, one family made up of 2 first-generation parents and 2 second-generation daughters, and one family made up of a second-generation father and his third-generation son.

By interviewing family members both individually, and in one case as a whole family, we explored how different generations felt about their connections to Albania and their willingness to visit or return to Albania or surrounding areas to explore rural culinary tourism. We sought to understand themes including reasons for leaving Albania, reasons for returning or not returning, and perspectives on RRNO's tourism ideas. The interviews formed the basis of family profiles to analyze the family as a whole.



Figure 3.9: Logo for Zoom Video Conferencing, the video call application we use for our interviews (Screenshot from wconline.com)

THE MARTINI FAMILY

Glinka, Megi, and Emi



Glinka (left), Emi (middle), Megi (right)

Maintaining a Strong Cultural Background

The Martini family is made up of three first generation Albanian women from Shkodër, Albania. Glinka is the mother of Megi (23) and Emi (20). Glinka grew up in Korçë, a city in southern Albania, until she moved to Shkodër where she got married. Eventually, her job at a bank required her to move to Germany for some years but she returned to Albania afterwards. The entire family moved from Albania to Worcester, Massachusetts in 2012 because the financial opportunities were more promising in the United States than those in Albania.

While Megi and Emi both have been able to go back to Albania on multiple occasions, Glinka has not been able to return since 2012. Megi and Emi both visited in the summer of 2013 and again in 2016. The sisters returned to Albania to visit friends and their grandparents, who they are very close with. Glinka did not return for these visits, as she stated, "I was the one spending the money." She noted that one of the difficulties being a new Albanian immigrant is the addition of taxes and bills that did not exist in Albania. To make ends meet, she was only able to have two weeks of vacation every year in order to provide for her children before herself. The family had plans to travel to Albania again in the summer of 2020 and Glinka would have been able to visit this time, but due to Covid-19 it was not able to happen.

Family Profile Design and Purpose

In order to identify family travel behaviors and identify multigenerational perspectives, we developed family profiles. In order to build these profiles, we interviewed families as well as individuals of families separately. In order to choose these participants, we looked for multigenerational families to gain as many different perspectives as possible. After speaking with multiple generations from three families, we reviewed our notes and the interview transcripts to write a profile of each family.



Megi (right) with friends in Shkodër

of the diaspora in a group organized by the RRNO Foundation.

Renewed Interest in Returning to Albania

While the Martini family would like to visit Albania again in the future, they would only like to do so as tourists. Megi noted that it is difficult to find time to travel when considering school and work, and that as the family gets older, they need to take more time to schedule their future vacations. In addition, the family has found it difficult to find common times that they are all available due to how busy the typical American schedule is. However, a common sentiment is that the family believes that Albania is still their home and all three would love to visit again.

Megi felt that if she were to go back, she would visit primarily to see her grandparents. While the family video calls them every other day, a call on Skype does not compare for her to seeing them in person. She was quite impartial about what activities they would do while in Albania; the most important part of the journey.

Enthusiasm towards RRNO's tourism is high

When discussing RRNO's goals and initiatives, the two daughters had very interesting takes on the possibility to go to Albania and surrounding countries to partake in culinary tourism. As Megi became older and more independent, she started to put greater value on the Albanian recipes that her mother and grandmother cook. She stated she would enjoy spending a weekend in a village where she can learn how to prepare and cook traditional Albanian food with local grandmothers. While Megi's perspective was focused on cooking, Emi's priority was learning about Albanian culture in general. She seemed most intrigued when the concept of an Albanian summer camp was brought up. This summer camp would be made members of the diaspora in order to learn about Albanian traditions, history, food, and customs as a group. She also would love to go to a village and cook traditional food like her sister. Emi was very interested in traveling to Albania with friends as well as meeting other members



Glinka, mother of Megi and Emi

THE CHRISTOPHER FAMILY

PETER AND NOEL CHRISTOPHER



Background

The Christopher family consists of Peter, a second generation Albanian and father of Noel and Jaret who are both third generation Albanian. Unfortunately, we were not able to find a time to interview Jaret.

Peter was the creator of the WPI Albanian Project Center and recently retired from WPI after 37 years of teaching Mathematics. Peter's father left Albania in 1920 after World War I devastated all his property. His father was 14 years old at the time but had to flee and say he was 16. In 1929, his father returned to marry his mother in an arranged marriage. Peter's brother was born in

Albania and the family eventually came to Massachusetts as a unit in 1936.

Noel was raised by his parents in an Albanian neighborhood in Worcester, Massachusetts. He now resides in New Jersey with his wife and two children who are 5 and 2 years old. He actively tries to encourage Albanian culture with his children, but he finds it difficult to do because it is not a completely Albanian household. He makes efforts to teach his children the culture through things like Albanian t-shirts, hats, and picture books, but not being able to cook Albanian meals or speak Albanian makes culture transmission difficult. He makes efforts to buy Albanian meals, however the pandemic makes it hard to do that.

Figure 3.10, 3.11, 3.12: Screenshots of a completed family profile design

Objective 1

Identify Pre-COVID Tourism Practices of the Members of the Albanian Diaspora

For this objective, the survey covered topics such as how often, where, and with whom the members of the diaspora traveled prior to COVID-19. Our survey questions included a 1-5 Likert scale, which varied depending on the question (Albert, 2013). These Likert scale questions included scales of “strongly disagree to strongly agree” as well as “not interested to very interested”. We limited free-response questions in this survey to focus more on quantitative data.

We sought to understand various themes related to travel and culinary tourism, including:

- *What kinds of groups do these populations travel in?*
- *Where have these populations traveled before?*
- *Are these populations interested in culinary tourism when traveling?*
- *How long do these populations generally travel for?*



This section of the survey will focus on your travel patterns **prior to Covid-19**. Please do not take account of travel restrictions due to the pandemic into consideration when filling out these questions. To clarify, a member of the Albanian diaspora is a person of Albanian descent that is no longer living in Albania.

Which of the following countries have you visited in the past? Please check as many as may apply.

- Albania
- Kosovo
- North Macedonia
- Montenegro
- I have not visited any of these countries

Figure 3.13: An example of final survey design

Objective 2

Determine Constraints That May Limit Travel Opportunities for the Members of the Albanian Diaspora

For this objective, parts of the survey targeted the constraints (time and cost) that may limit the ability of members of the Albanian Diaspora to travel to Albania. A majority of the survey questions asked for numerical responses such as *“how many weeks do you normally have for vacation”*; others used a Likert scale or a semantic differential scale. A semantic differential scale is a question that does not involve numbers in ranking, but rather a span between two related but opposite descriptions of an opinion, such as ranking something between *‘cheap’* and *‘expensive’* (Takahashi et al., 2016). In this portion of the survey, we explored issues related to time availability, interest, and comfort in traveling for extended periods of time.

We also made an effort to understand these questions in our interviews when we asked participants their reasoning for returning or not returning to Albania or the surrounding areas.

“How willing would you be to travel for the following amounts of time? Please respond on a scale from 1, very unwilling, to 5, very willing. One week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks.”

Figure 3.14: Example survey question asking about comfort of traveling for different amounts of time

In this section of the survey, we sought to understand:

- *On average, how much vacation time do members of the Albanian diaspora have per year?*
- *On average, how much time do people spend on a typical vacation when they travel?*
- *Would they be interested in spending long periods of time (i.e., a trip lasting multiple weeks) in Albania?*

Objective 3

Assess the Appeal of Culinary Tourism to Members of the Albanian Diaspora



Figure 3.15: Example scenario: Cooking with a grandmother (Photo from Matthias Haupt)

For this objective, we used individual and family interviews, and the survey to understand if participants are interested in culinary tourism, and if they have participated in culinary tourism in the past. In the survey, we worked with RRNO to develop hypothetical scenarios to understand the diaspora's interest in some of RRNO's tourism ideas. An example of a scenario relating to cooking with grandmothers can be found above Figure 3.15 and is described in the survey as:

*Please rank the following scenario in terms of your interest of experiencing them, with 1 being very uninterested and 5 being very interested: **In this activity you would be learning how to prepare traditional Albanian cuisine alongside local grandmothers in a rural village in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia.***

We used similar scenarios in our interviews to gain different, in-depth perspectives on RRNO's tourism ideas. We also asked interview participants if they had participated in culinary tourism in any past vacations, which helped us understand the interest of culinary tourism in general.

These scenarios helped us understand a number of issues, including:

- The types of tourism members of the Albanian diaspora are interested in.
- What do they look for when researching destinations?
- What are their attitudes towards Albanian culinary tourism?
- What are the interest levels of rural tourism of the Albanian Diaspora?

Objective 4

Evaluate the Levels of Connection that Members of the Albanian Diaspora and their Families Have Towards Albania

In order to gain this information, we created semantic differential scale questions that asked people to rank how they feel connected to Albania in different ways. For the case of participants with children, we also asked them how they believe they influence this connection with their children. An example of this question can be found below:

*Traveling with my children is...
(Semantic differential scale with choices of cheap --> expensive, easy --> difficult, relaxed --> chaotic, amusement --> education).*

We also asked interview participants how they stay connected to their Albanian heritage while away from Albania. We also asked if there were any foods that reminded them of Albania, which helped us delve deeper into their connection. We asked interview participants if they had the desire to return to Albania and what was their level of interest in returning and exploring their roots.



**Figure 3.16: Megi Martini (right), visiting her cousins in Albania in 2013
(Photo from the Martini Family)**

This line of questioning helped us understand:

- *What makes people want to (or not want to) travel to Albania?*
- *What relationship do members of the Albanian diaspora have with Albania and the stories their parents tell?*
- *Is there a desire for a deeper connection with Albania in members of the Albanian diaspora?*

Objective 5

Determine the Impact that Families have on Travel Habits

This objective looked at the influence family members have travel. For example: *Are children an inhibiting factor in terms of length of vacation? To what extent are children the reason for returning to Albania?*

We wanted to understand the complexities related to family travel. A question from the survey is shown below:

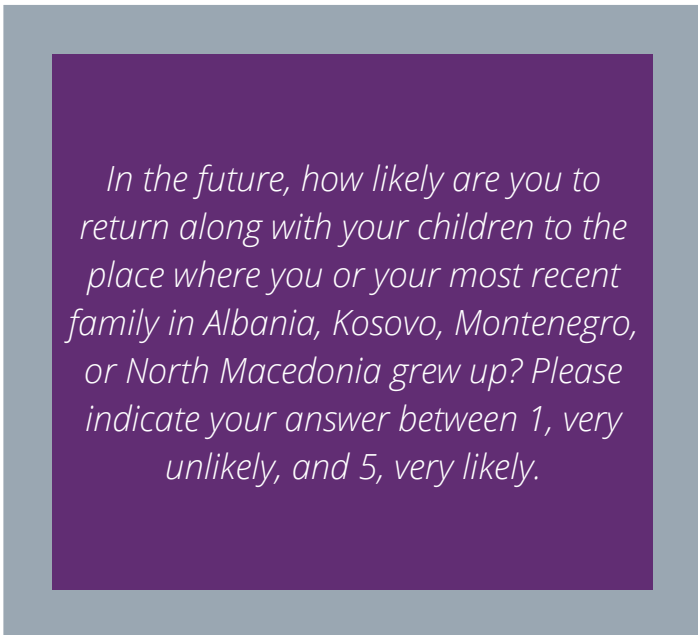


Figure 3.17: A question from our survey asking if a parent would be interested in seeing most recent family in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia

Like other objectives, we used our interviews to further explore issues related to family dynamics. We interviewed three different families to understand how children affect travel.

We sought to understand the following questions:

- *Do 2nd and 3rd generations want to bring their children back to Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro?*
- *Is it difficult to travel with children? If so, why?*
- *Are children preventing members of the diaspora from participating in some activities?*
- *Do children have an effect on where people travel and for how long?*

Analysis Strategy

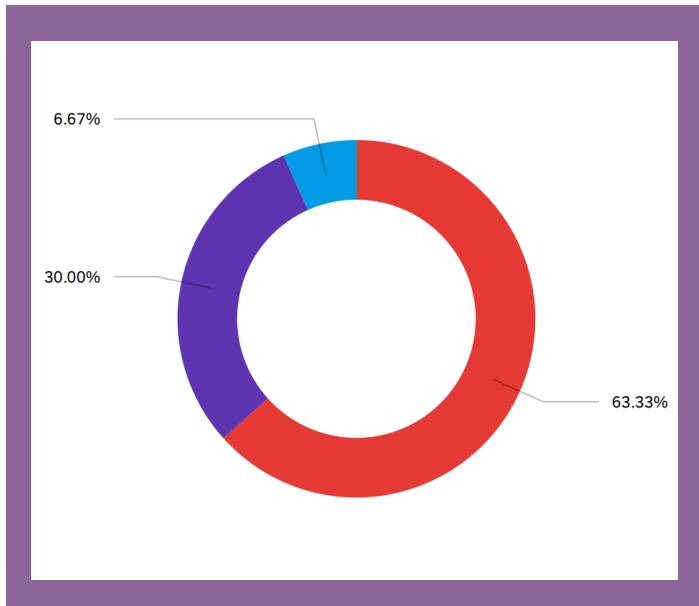


Figure 3.18: Example of Qualtrics data analysis showing a pie chart of the different generations of survey participants

We used both statistical and thematic analyses. Due to not having enough respondents to create statistically significant results, we used simple statistical analysis for the numerical responses in the survey. We analyzed responses to our Qualtrics survey using built-in analytic software that showed the distribution of the data primarily in graphical form and in Excel spreadsheets. We used thematic analysis to formulate main themes that occurred in the open-ended questions of the survey as well as the interviews (Berg, 2004).

Thematic analysis helped us determine motivations that promote travel related to culinary tourism as well as those that inhibit travel. We used this form of analysis to help us identify generational differences and similarities in order to create our family profiles. In order to do this type of analysis, as mentioned previously in this chapter, we filmed each interview and created transcripts. Transcripts allowed us to look at the responses in an easier way to understand and form conclusions.

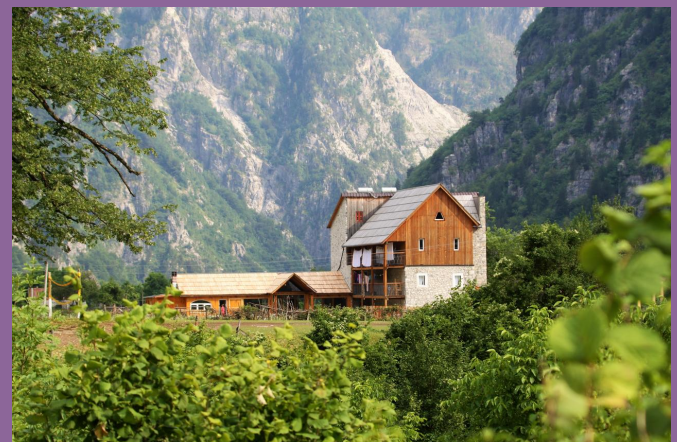


Figure 3.19: A house in the rural village of Theth (Photo from Matthias Haupt)



Findings

Figure 4.1: A bag of freshly picked berries (Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook)

Findings Context

In this section, we discuss the results of the Qualtrics survey, interviews with individuals from the diaspora, and our discussions with the Christopher, Miloshi and Martini families. We have organized our findings around three main themes

that we determined to be a summary of our objectives: reasons for returning to Albania, connection to Albanian culture, and interest in culinary tourism.

Additionally, we considered these themes through a multigenerational lens.

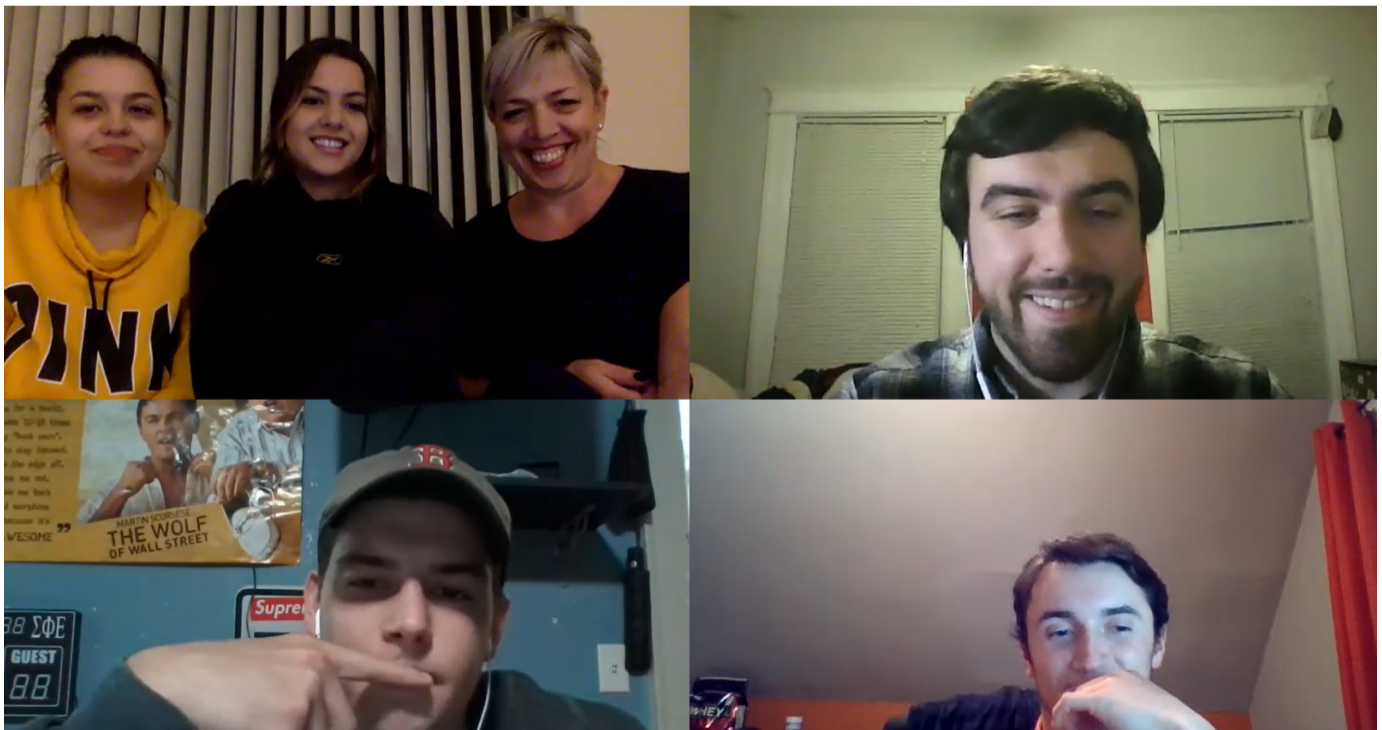


Figure 4.2: A screen capture of a focus group conducted over Zoom with Megi, Emi, and Glinka Martini.

Survey Demographics

The online Qualtrics survey generated 34 responses during the period it was online, from November 4, 2020 to November 28, 2020. The respondents to the survey were 55% male and 45% female; of these, 63% were first generation Albanian (including people still living in Albania), 30% were second generation Albanian, and 7% were third generation Albanian. About 77% of respondents' families left Albania in the post-communist era, with about 13% leaving during the communist era and 10% leaving prior to the communist era. Figure 4.3 is a word cloud representing the locations where the survey participants' families came from in Albania and the surrounding countries. About 71% of the survey participants were 35 or younger, and about 21% of the survey participants had children.



Figure 4.3: Word cloud of areas in the Balkans where survey participants had family. Larger words signify popular responses (made with wordcloud.com)

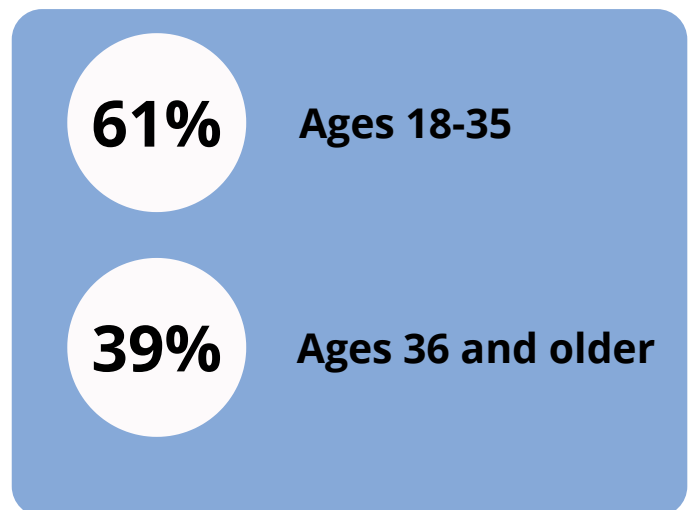


Figure 4.4: Percentages of each age range that participated in the survey

Where are our survey respondents?

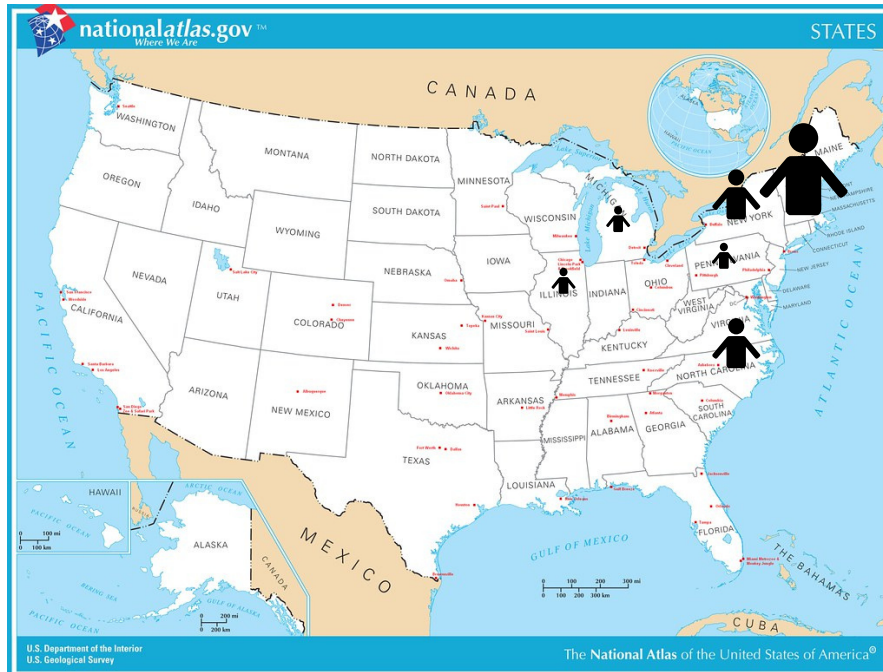


Figure 4.5: Map of the U.S. showing where survey participants are from (only U.S. participants)
(Photo from Flickr user: W i l l a r d)



57% from Massachusetts



30% from other areas of the U.S.



13% from Europe



Who are our survey respondents?



55% were male



45% were female



21% had children



79% did not have children

1st generation Albanians made up **63%** of respondents

2nd generation Albanians made up **30%** of respondents

3rd generation Albanians made up **7%** of respondents

77% of participants' families left in the post-communist era (1991 - Present)

13% of participants' families left during the communist era (1941-1991)

10% of participants' families left in the pre-communist era (Before 1941)



**Reasons for
Returning to
Albania and the
Surrounding
Countries**

Finding #1:

Members of the Albanian diaspora have traveled to Albania and surrounding countries in the past and intend to return.

The survey indicated a clear connection to Albanian culture in the form of having traveled to Albania as well as the surrounding countries. Nearly all had visited the area at least once, with the majority travelling to the region on multiple occasions. 74% of respondents had been to Albania, 21% to Kosovo, 24% to Montenegro, and 27% to North Macedonia.

Only 7% of respondents had not been to any of the four countries. In addition, about 71% of respondents to the survey had traveled to these countries on more than three occasions. We later completed an analysis of survey participants that had traveled on several occasions.

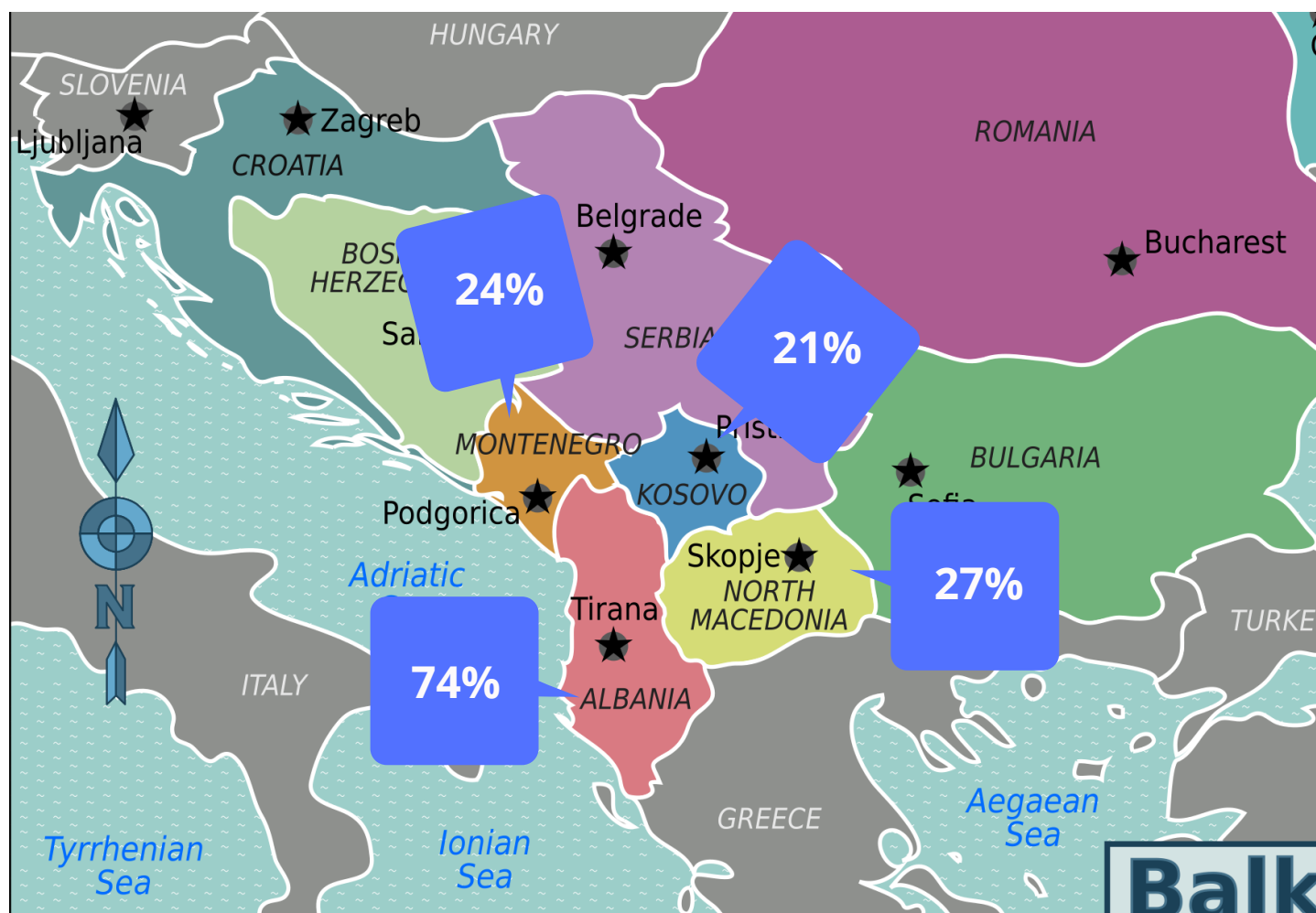


Figure 4.6: Percentage of survey participants that have returned to Albania and surrounding countries (Photo from Peter Fitzgerald)



71%

Of survey participants have traveled to Albania or the surrounding areas 3 or more times

We found that while about 82% of first-generation members of the diaspora had traveled to Albania and the surrounding countries on at least several occasions, only 60% of second-generation members and 50% of third-generation members had done the same. In addition, while 68% of members of the diaspora living in the United States had traveled to Albania and the surrounding countries on several occasions, 100% of the Europeans we surveyed had done so.

Most survey and interview participants plan to visit Albania in the future, either with friends or family, and many expressed an interest in visiting Albania, or the surrounding areas multiple times in the future. For example, Emi and Megi Martini (first-generation Albanian women) both have been able to return since they left Albania in 2012. They returned to see their grandparents and cousins who still live in Albania and plan to travel again when Covid-19 is not a problem. The Martini sisters see returning to Albania as a vacation trip. In the case of culinary tourism, it is part of their vacation, but it is not the primary reason for travel. As we mentioned previously in the background section, Yun (2011) segments culinary tourists into 4 categories. Opportunistic culinary tourism fits the description of what the sisters are looking to do. They like the idea of culinary tourism being promoted by RRNO, but that will be one of many things they do on their trip and is not their main motivation factor to travel. For many of the participants we interviewed, culinary tourism is on the list of activities to do but no participants would return to Albania only for culinary tourism.

THE MARTINI FAMILY

Glinka, Megi, and Emi



Glinka (left), Emi (middle), Megi (right) (Photo from Martini Family)

Maintaining a Strong Cultural Background

The Martini family is made up of three Albanian women from Shkodër, Albania. For the purposes of our report, we categorized them all as first-generation as they were all born in Albania. Glinka is the mother of Megi (23) and Emi (20). Glinka grew up in Korçë, a city in southern Albania, until she moved to Shkodër where she got married. Eventually, her job at a bank required her to move to Germany for 2 years but she returned to Albania afterwards. Glinka, Emi, and Megi moved from Albania to Worcester, Massachusetts in 2012 because the financial opportunities were more promising in the United States than those in Albania.

While Megi and Emi both have been able to go back to Albania on multiple occasions, Glinka has not been able to return since 2012. Megi and Emi both visited in the summer of 2013 and again in 2016. The sisters returned to Albania to visit friends and their grandparents, who they are close with. Glinka did not return for these visits, as she stated, "I was the one spending the money." To make ends meet, she was only able to have two weeks of vacation every year and to provide for her children before herself. The family had plans to travel and visit family in Albania in the summer of 2020 and Glinka would have been able to visit this time, but due to Covid-19 the family was not able to travel.



**Megi (right) with friends in Shkoder
(Photo from Martini Family)**

Interest in RRNO's Initiatives is High

When discussing RRNO's goals and initiatives, the two daughters had varying views on the possibility to go to Albania and surrounding countries to take part in culinary tourism. As Megi became older and more independent, she put greater value on the Albanian recipes that her mother and grandmother (who is still in Albania) cook. She stated she would enjoy spending a weekend in a village where she can learn how to prepare and cook traditional Albanian food with local grandmothers. While Megi's perspective was focused on cooking, Emi's priority was learning about Albanian culture in general. She was most intrigued by the concept of an Albanian summer camp. This summer camp, proposed by RRNO as a possible travel initiative, would be made up of members of the diaspora to learn about Albanian traditions, history, food, and customs as a group. She also would be interested in going to a village and cook traditional food like her sister. Emi was extremely interested in traveling to Albania with friends as well as meeting

other members of the diaspora in a group organized by the RRNO Foundation.

Renewed Interest in Returning to Albania

The Martini family would like to visit Albania again in the future. Megi noted that it is difficult to find time to travel when considering school and work, and that as family members get older, they need to take more time to schedule their future vacations. In addition, the family has found it difficult to find common times when they are all available. However, a common sentiment is that the family believes that Albania is still their home and all three would like to visit again.

Megi felt that if she were to go back, she would visit primarily to see her grandparents. While the family video calls them every other day, a call on Skype does not compare for her to seeing them in person. She was impartial about what activities she and her sister would do while in Albania; to her, being with her family while traveling is the most important part of the journey.



**Glinka, mother of Megi and Emi
(Photo from Martini Family)**



**Emi (middle) with friends at an Albanian festival in Worcester
(Photo from the Martini Family)**

As she stated,

"I really enjoy the company [in Albania], so it doesn't really matter what I'm doing, as long as I'm with my friends, my cousins, or my grandparents."

However, she also said that when traveling with these people she would be glad to visit the beautiful areas of the country that she had visited in the past.

Glinka would be interested in going back to connect to the country that she spent most of her life in. She noted that even though Albania is a small country, there is a lot to see there and even in her years there she could not see everything it had to offer. She noted she would enjoy traveling to the mountains again, and if she were to visit, she would also likely visit the surrounding countries such as Greece.

Emi was the final one of her family to speak about what she would like to do while traveling in Albania. Since she left while she was still young, she has drifted apart from many of her friends that she had when she was in Albania, but they manage to follow each other on social media to some degree. Being separated between the ages of 12 and 20 in conjunction with Emi's busy schedule caused distancing from her friends. She did note that if she were to go back, she would like to do 'touristy activities' that she missed having not grown up there for her entire life. Among these are visiting the beaches on the coast of Albania and hiking on trails in the countryside. Like many members of the Albanian diaspora we have spoken to, Emi feels that visiting Albania could serve to connect to Albanian culture to develop a deep personal relationship with not only food, but with the country and people as well. This connection allows her to know where the traditions and recipes that she has known for all of her life originate from and why it is important that they are preserved. With this, she will also be able to pass these on to her own family as time moves on.

Finding #2:

Older generations have returned for culinary tourism; the younger generations have not but are interested to do so.

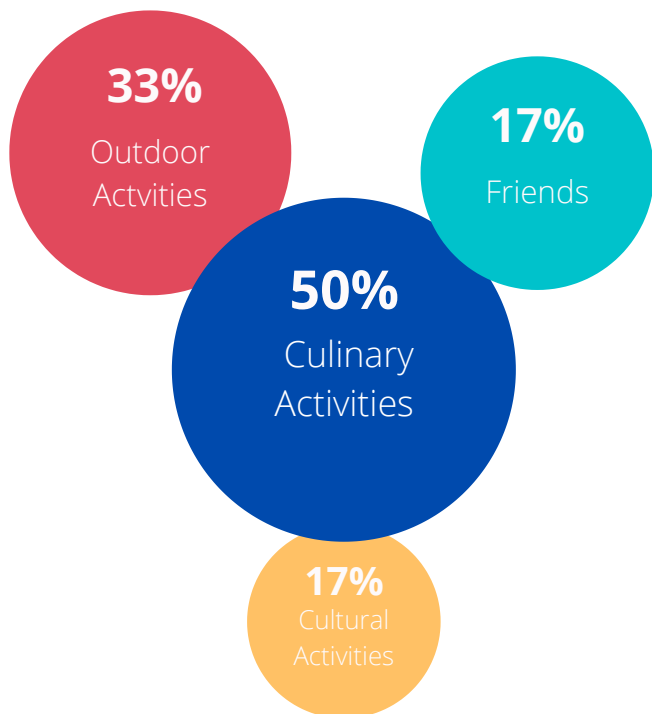


Figure 4.7: Past motivations for travel to Albania and surrounding countries within the older generation (36 and older)

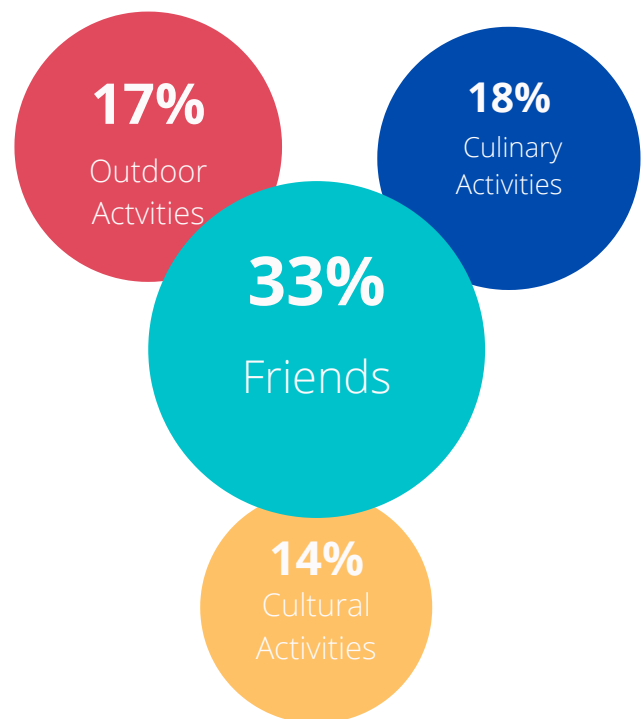


Figure 4.8: Past motivations for travel to Albania and surrounding countries within the younger generation (18-35)

The survey shows a drastic difference between the younger demographic (18-35) and the older demographic (36 or older) in terms of their reasons for traveling back to Albania and the surrounding countries. While both groups had traveled to see family and friends still living in Albania, only 18% of the younger demographic indicated that they had traveled to Albania to pursue culinary tourism as an aspect of their visit. On the other hand, approximately 50% of the older demographic indicated that they had traveled to Albania and the surrounding countries to pursue culinary tourism.

Findings

No activities were specified in the question. In our interview, Peter Christopher (a second-generation member of the diaspora) stated that in his multiple short (i.e., about a weeklong) visits to Albania, he has intentionally pursued culinary tourism and had visited attractions such as Uka Farm, a farm and winery located near Tirana. Despite his familiarity with Albanian food and his experiences of high-end gastronomy in the urban areas of Albania, Peter Christopher was very interested in the rural culinary tourism that RRNO promotes.

The younger generations indicated that seeing friends and visiting where they, or their parents, grew up are also interesting to them. They indicated very low interest towards cultural and historical experiences, whereas the older generation was the opposite. The older generation indicated that historical experience is just as interesting as culinary tourism. In the instance of Peter Christopher, these historical experiences for him were visiting museums and seeing old ruins and historical sites. A commonality between the two groups is their low interest in outdoor activities. In total, only 6 out of 34 respondents indicated that they have done this.

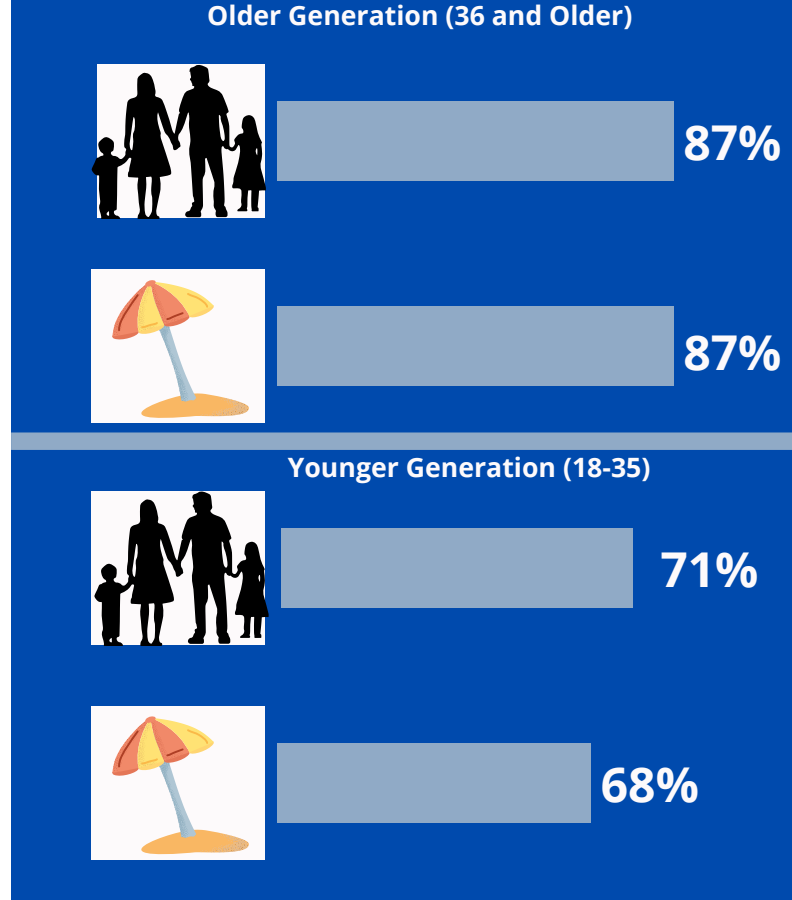


Figure 4.9: Family and Vacation as motivations to travel back to Albania or surrounding areas

"I would sleep outside and get eaten by bugs to be able to go on a tour like that."

Suela Miloshi

However, we cannot conclude that there is no interest in culinary tourism among the younger generation. When asked if they would be interested in culinary tourism activities such as by means of scenarios proposed by RRNO, much of the younger demographic indicated that they would be at least moderately interested. These scenarios included cooking with local grandmothers, homestays, and participating in an 'Albanian summer camp,' which would consist of activities to learn about Albanian history and culture with members of the diaspora similar in age.

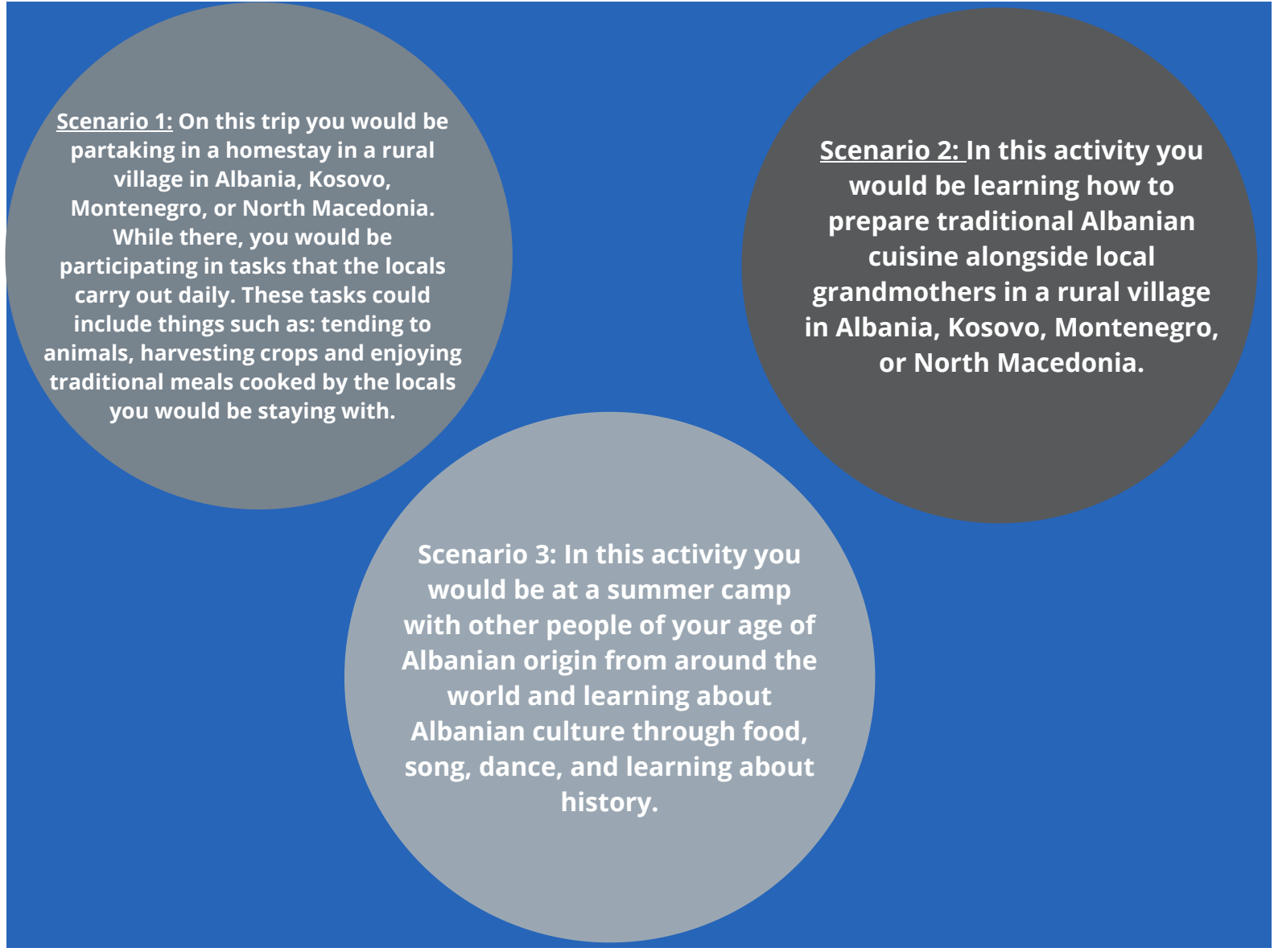


Figure 4.10: Full scenarios from the Qualtrics survey

Many of our interview participants echoed these sentiments when asked about their plans to travel back to Albania. Suela Miloshi, a 21-year-old second-generation Albanian, noted that she would enjoy visiting and participating activities to expand on the Albanian cooking that her family taught her.

Having been born in the United States she would like a deeper connection to where her family came from (Gjirokastër and Fier). As Peter Christopher stated, he would enjoy RRNO’s tourism objectives as they combine two of his favorite activities: visiting Albania and eating food.



**Connection to
Albanian Culture**

Finding #3:

Younger members of the Albanian diaspora feel that their connection to Albania is eroding and believe that there is more for them to learn about Albanian culinary traditions.

In our survey, many of the younger generation members of the Albanian diaspora (younger than 25) who have lived in the United States for several years felt they had more to learn about certain aspects of Albanian culture such as language, food, and traditions. For example, in our family discussion, Emi Martini, a twenty-year-old who left Albania when she was twelve, noted that she has had trouble keeping in touch with her Albanian friends from her childhood. As she stated, "...I still see my friends from when I was younger on Instagram, but that's about as far as the relationship goes." In addition, her sister, Megi Martini noted she did not know how to cook as much Albanian food as she would like. She worked along with her mother, Glinka, while staying at home for Covid-19 restrictions, and was able to learn about some of these recipes but still felt that there was more to learn.

When prompted about the activities that RRNO promotes, Emi, Megi, and most others that we interviewed were very positive and thought that they would help them experience aspects of Albanian culture that they were unable to experience due to growing up in the United States. Emi and Megi were most interested in cooking with local grandmothers. They both feel that they have very little knowledge of recipes and traditions that their mother and grandmother use. Because Emi left when she was only 12, her cultural development was still in the process of growing.

“ I would absolutely do the tours. I've seen the beaches, I've seen the country, but not growing up in Albania you miss out a lot on the culture, language and traditions. No matter how much your family teaches you, you're still missing out on so much. My mom had to milk a cow and make cheese, but I don't have to do that. Even making the food. My grandmother makes Byrek by hand and takes forever. In America you buy the dough, put the stuff on it and put it in the oven. ”

- Suela Miloshi

This feeling of disconnection continued in a family discussion we conducted with the Miloshi family. The Miloshi family has been in the United States for about two decades, and due to this they began to experience acculturation.

In this case, acculturation is the shift from Albanian culture to American culture, like that which Kosta detailed in his research. Suela felt that she would be able to better understand her own culture by engaging in culinary tourism and would be able to learn more about the traditions that can only be understood by doing them in person.

THE MILOSHI FAMILY

PURSUING FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Miloshi family is comprised of two first generation Albanian parents, Jovi and Linda and their second-generation Albanian daughters, Suela (21) and Albina (17). Linda was born in Gjirokastër and Jovi was born in Fier. In the 1990's after the fall of communism in Albania, Linda emigrated to Greece to find work. Jovi had similar reasons for emigration. The couple came to the U.S in 1992, when they were in their 20's and found jobs at coffee shops in Massachusetts. They felt that there were better opportunities in the U.S than in Greece or in Albania, and it was a good place to raise their children. They ended up living in Needham, Massachusetts where they regularly keep in contact with Albina and Suela's grandparents, who also now live in the United States.

CONNECTING WITH ALBANIA THROUGH LANGUAGE AND TRADITION

Suela and Albina regularly speak Albanian with their parents and especially their grandparents, who do not speak English. The sisters emphasized that language was the first step in their connection to Albanian culture. The family sings Albanian music, participates in traditional dances and cooks traditional Albanian recipes such as Byrek. Suela and Albina's grandmother teaches them how to cook these recipes, serving as a frequent reminder of where the family came from. Since 1992, the family has returned to Albania twice for vacation, once in 2006 and once in 2017 where the family visited the parents'



hometowns and explored areas of the country that they had not seen before. They do not have many relatives living in Albania anymore, so their trips back to Albania will be to explore unfamiliar places in the country.

Both sisters mentioned that they feel disconnected in the way that there is much more that they can learn about their connection to Albania, but it is difficult to learn from stories they are told. They feel there is much more to understand about their roots such as recipes that they have eaten but are unsure how to cook

them and traditions that they have during holidays that they feel returning to Albanian will help them gain more knowledge about. When asked “do you feel more Albanian or American”, both Suela and Albina said “Albanian” without hesitation. The sisters said they feel they are “90% Albanian and 10% American”. Suela further elaborated by saying

"It is who I am, and it is a part of me."

SECOND GENERATION FEELS THERE IS MORE TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR ROOTS

One obvious difference between the parents and children in the Miloshi family is the desire to return to Albania. The family returned as a unit the first time in 2007 and a second time in 2018; due to how different their ages were between the first and second trip, their perspectives on these two trips are very different. During the first trip, the sisters were very young and were not able to deeply embrace Albanian culture. However, they were both more mature in 2018 and were able to understand the aspects of their own culture that they saw throughout the trip, including foods they eat and why their family acts the way they do due to their upbringing. Suela is very interested in exploring the rural parts of Albania and experiencing the local traditions and food. When asked if she was interested in RRNO’s initiatives, she said

"I would absolutely do the tours. I've seen the beaches, I've seen the country, but not growing up in Albania you miss out a lot on the culture, language, and traditions. No matter how much your family teaches you, you're still missing out on so much."

Albina is very interested in the beaches and coastal regions but feels she can learn from her grandmother about Albanian food. As she put it, “I have my grandmother for that.”

The parents’ opinions are very different, and they have no desire to return. This is not because of bad experiences or trauma from the communist regime, but they feel the places they grew up in are not nearly what they used to be. They felt the cities looked completely different. and feel their life is better now in the U.S.



Finding #4:

Food is an important mode of connection to Albanian heritage.

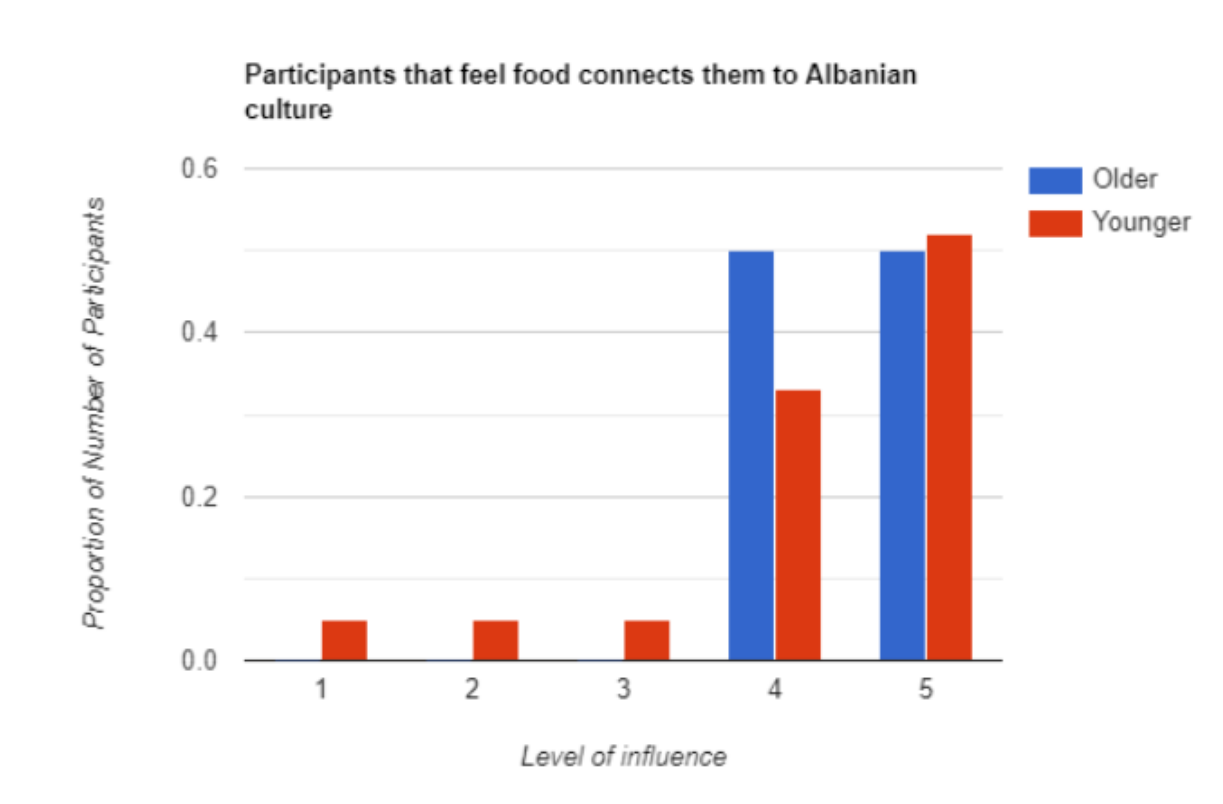


Figure 4.11: Bar graph showing the level of influence family has on learning Albanian culture (Graph created with rapidtables.com)

One of our goals was to understand how traditional Albanian food carries memories and cultural identity for diaspora families. Food is a way that members of the diaspora stay connected to their roots. This is very clearly shown in Figure 4.11 and we used our interviews to further explore that concept.

When asked how they feel connected to Albanian culture, cooking Albanian meals and eating Albanian food daily was a very common response.

A follow-up question we asked was “is there a food that connects you to your childhood or when you were in Albania?” Every interview participant responded with a food and a story behind it. For every participant, it brought back memories of their childhoods and where they grew up. Megi Martini said the food that reminds her of home is a tomato soup with white beans. She remembers her grandmother telling her that soldiers used to eat it because there was an excess of white beans.

Petra Kumi, a first-generation young Albanian professional was reminded of fresh Albanian feta cheese when we asked her this question. Petra was very proud of this cheese; she told us about how she enjoyed bringing it from Albania to her roommates in the United States and said that the quality of the cheese always impressed them. She also noted how this cheese is used to make qofte, which she ate often in her childhood. This finding aligns to author Almerico's notion about how food is connected to culture and memories, which we noted earlier in the background chapter. The way a person is brought up with food, or lack thereof, is something that stays with them during their lives and therefore this question sparks their memories.

Key Informant Interviews

Petra
Kumi

A recent graduate from WPI and a first-generation member of the Albanian diaspora originally from central Albania. She has lived in Massachusetts for the past four years and noted that due to the limitations of student and work visas, she is not able to visit Albania as often as she would like.

" Whenever I visit Albania, I bring home feta cheese with me and let my roommates try it. One tried it for the first time and said 'I've never had anything like this before!' "

Petra Kumi

Finding #5:

Family has a strong influence on cultural connection.

As seen in Figure 4.12, 83% of participants that are parents agreed that it was important to encourage their children to see themselves as Albanian or having Albanian heritage. Some 50% of survey participants strongly agreed with the statement “I strongly influence my children to explore Albanian culture”, and 33% moderately agreed with it. In the interviews, many people spoke about how their cultural identity was shaped by their grandparents. During our interview with Albina Miloshi, a second-generation member of the diaspora, she noted that her grandmother taught her about Albanian food to the degree that she would not be interested in pursuing culinary tourism. While this opinion was not shared by her sister Suela, their grandmother’s ability to cook traditional meals and show Albina how to do this herself is what helped her to know as much as she does about her culture’s food.

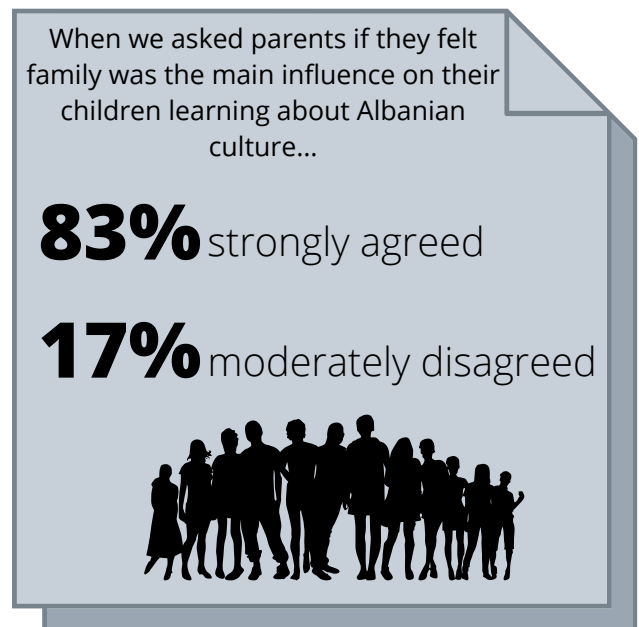


Figure 4.12: Parents' feelings on the idea of family as the main cultural influence on their children



Figure 4.13: Parents' feelings on being the main cultural influence on their children



**Interest in
Culinary Tourism**

Finding #6:

Members of the Albanian diaspora are interested in RRNO's tourism initiatives.

In our survey and interviews, we asked participants to consider three scenarios related to potential RRNO food tourism initiatives: cooking with local grandmothers in rural villages, attending a homestay in a rural village, and attending a summer camp that focused on learning about Albanian history and culture. For our purposes, we defined a homestay as an activity in which the participant would spend time in a rural Albanian village along with a host family who would let the participant accompany them throughout their daily tasks.

Diaspora members and young Albanian professionals expressed

moderate to high interest in RRNO's scenarios. For both the homestay and summer camp scenarios, 69% of survey participants were at least moderately interested (4 or 5 on a Likert scale with 1 as very uninterested and 5 as very interested). When asked about cooking with grandmothers, 78% of survey participants were at least moderately interested, which was consistent among both the older and younger generations with 83% of the older demographic at least moderately interested in every scenario. In addition, 74% of the younger demographic was interested in cooking with local grandmothers and 68% were interested in homestays or an Albanian summer camp.

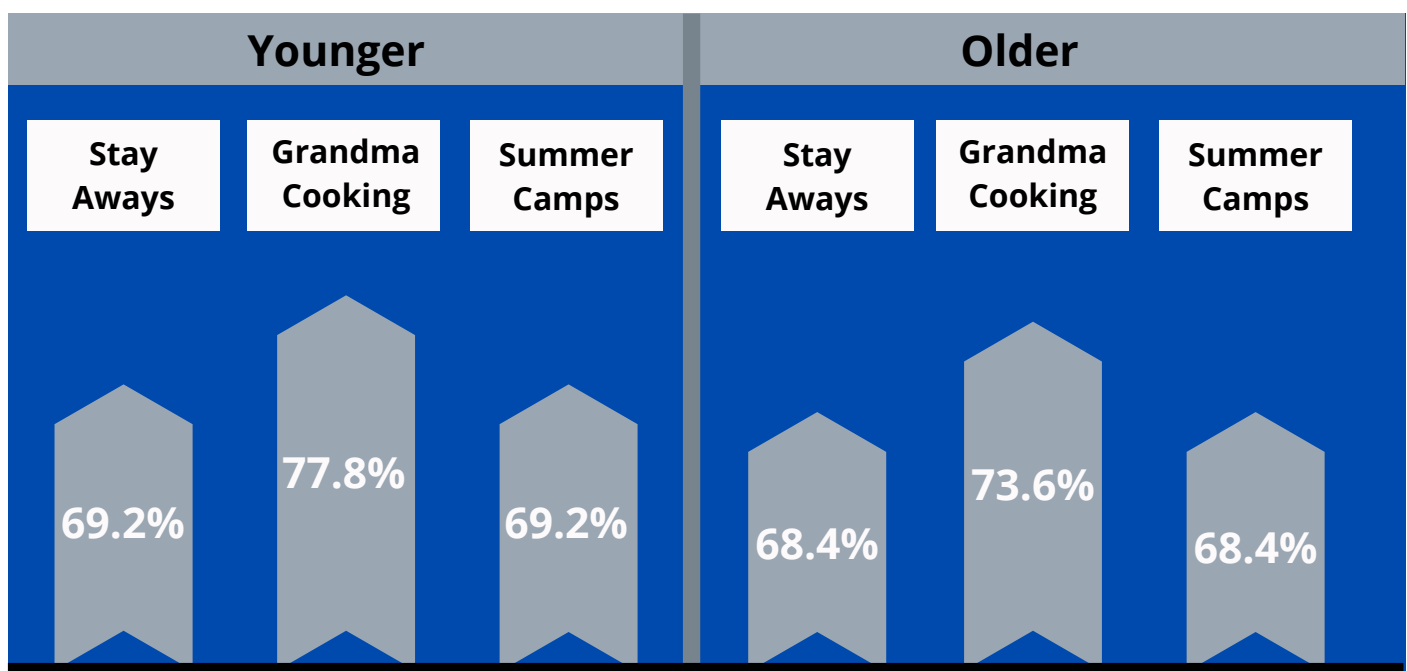


Figure 4.14: Interest in RRNO's tourism ideas

We found the same degree of interest in the scenarios in our individual and family interviews. Throughout all 13 conversations we had with members of the diaspora and young Albanian professionals, only two indicated that they would not be interested in RRNO's food tourism initiatives. Gent Gjuta, a young Albanian civil engineer from the Kukës region, was not interested as he had similar experiences to rural culinary tourism when visiting his rural hometown every month. All others, aside from Albina Miloshi, were interested in RRNO's tourism initiatives and gave us ideas of how these would work best for them. Some of these ideas were about time commitments: Noel Christopher would only be interested in participating in a tour for a day at a time in order to have enough time to take care of his young children, while Emi and Glinka Martini would be interested in going for multiple weeks at a time to learn traditional Albanian recipes and techniques. Many participants seemed interested in doing a combination of these. For example, tending to a farm for some time, harvesting what they need to make a traditional meal, and then cooking it themselves. Another example could be a homestay in which they would have cooking lessons involved during this stay. When asked about cooking with local grandmothers, Petra Kumi said that she would prefer to travel with a group of people that she knows well such as her friends and family if she were to travel somewhere new. However, if she were

to travel close to home in central Albania, she would be interested in traveling with members of the Albanian diaspora that she did not know personally. Location played a role in our interview participants' willingness to travel. Some interview participants such as Michael and Meggie Kola noted that they would be more willing to travel if they were going somewhere they knew well due to wanting to visit family that still lived in the area. Others, such as Glinka Martini, stated that they would prefer to go somewhere new in order to learn more about parts of the country they were not familiar with. While everybody we interviewed had their own idea of what their perfect culinary tour with RRNO would be, the vast majority were interested in the tours, nonetheless.

Key Informant Interviews

Michael Kola

A technical second-generation member of the Albanian diaspora that moved to Albania a few years after he was born and returned to the United States after high school and is a recent WPI graduate

Meggie Kola

A technical second-generation member of the diaspora that moved to Albania after she was born and returned to the United States her junior year of high school. During her time in Albania, she lived in Tirana. She is currently a junior at WPI

Finding #7:

Members of the Albanian diaspora are interested in returning to Albania or surrounding areas for 1-3 weeks.

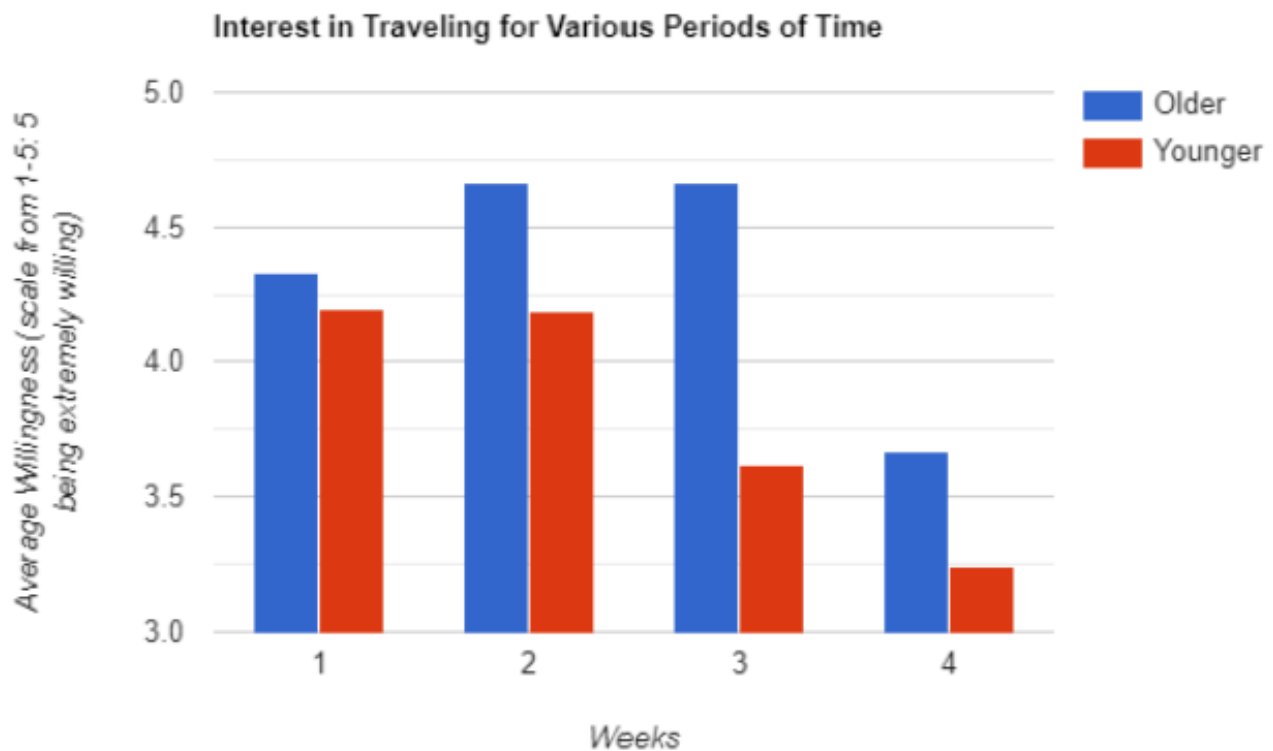


Figure 4.15: Interest in different lengths of travel for vacations

The food tourism scenarios discussed above depend on whether participants are able and willing to spend 1 to 3 weeks in Albania. In both our survey and interviews, most participants indicated that they would be willing to travel to Albania for one to three weeks at a time. Some 86% of the younger generation felt comfortable traveling for ten days at a time. Most participants felt that they could travel for one to three weeks, but had decreasing interest in traveling for four weeks at a time.

Interest in travel time also varies in terms of one's familial situation. Those that we interviewed that did not have children were generally interested in longer periods of travel; Petra Kumi stated that while she would have to keep work in mind while traveling, she would be willing to allot a full week to travel. Others had longer periods of time in mind; Emi and Glinka Martini both indicated that they would like to travel for multiple weeks at a time.

THE CHRISTOPHER FAMILY

PETER AND NOEL CHRISTOPHER



Peter (left), Noel (middle) and Peter and Noel's families (Photo from Peter)

Background

The Christopher family consists of Peter, a second-generation Albanian and his two sons, one of whom, Noel, we interviewed.

Peter founded the WPI Albanian Project Center and recently retired from WPI after 57 years of teaching Mathematics. Peter's father left Albania in 1920 after World War I devastated his property. His father was 14 years old at the time but had to lie and say he was 16. In 1929, his father returned to Korçë to marry his mother in an arranged marriage. Peter's brother was born in Albania and the family eventually came to Massachusetts as a unit in 1936; Peter was born in Worcester, MA soon after.

Noel was raised by his parents in an Albanian neighborhood in Worcester, Massachusetts. He now resides in New Jersey with his wife and two children who are 5 and 2 years old. He actively tries to encourage his children to learn about Albania and feel Albanian, but he finds it difficult to do because it is not a completely Albanian household. His wife is not Albanian, and his town in New Jersey does not have a large Albanian presence. He makes efforts to teach his children to identify as Albanian Americans through items like Albanian t-shirts, hats, and picture books. However, not being able to cook Albanian meals or speak Albanian makes culture transmission difficult, especially when not being exposed daily in an Albanian community, unlike Peter and Noel who were raised in Albanian communities.

Language, a 3rd Generation Cultural Disconnect

While Peter is fluent in Albanian, he did not teach it to Noel. Between the ages of four and eight, Peter attended Albanian language school and was also exposed to Albanian from other members of the community. In addition, his parents were both first-generation Albanian and felt more comfortable speaking in Albanian together while at home which gave him constant exposure to the language. Peter and his wife did not pursue Albanian language school while their children were young, instead exposing their children to Albanian traditions through the local church and within the household.

Although Noel is third generation, he feels he is much more connected to Albanian culture than many would expect. His father, or as Noel called him, “Mr. Albania”, was the primary reason he feels this way.

Family as a Unit of Travel

One consistency between Peter and Noel regarding RRNO’s travel initiatives is that if they were to participate in culinary tourism during a vacation, they would like to do it with family. As Peter stated,

“All the times I’ve visited the country I’ve never spent more than a few days... I’d love to take the grandkids.”

Noel’s opinion towards travel ideas such as cooking with Albanian grandmothers was similar and completely revolved around bringing his children. Noel stated that he would be bring his two children anywhere he went while traveling in Albania which also underscored some challenges in his ability to travel. He felt that he would only be able to travel out of the city for a day at a time in order to take care of his young children where they were staying. Although he found the idea of homestays exciting, he did not think he would be able to participate in them due to having to care for his children.

Reasons for Returning: Business Transitions to Leisure

The rationale for traveling to Albania is very different for Peter and Noel. As the director of the Albanian Project center at WPI, Peter would go every year with a group of students. In 1990, Peter visited with a group of other professionals where they were part of a two-week tour around the country. This occurred during the communist regime and he explained how careful he had to be. He elaborated by saying, “Every meeting room was bugged, so we had to be very careful with what we said.” However right after the regime fell, Peter was offered a grant to conduct a math study and teach at a university. He accepted this offer and stayed nine months in Albania. Now that he is retired and looks at Albania as more of a tourist destination he stated,

“Now that I’m retired, I would like to go back and visit as soon as possible, just to visit. Not so much to visit family, just to visit the country. Sign me up for the food tours!”

For Noel, he has only seen Albania as a tourist destination. He visited Albania in 2011 with Peter and his brother, Jaret, and they were able to explore the country by “seeing sights, eating food, relaxing, and having a good time.” Noel elaborated on the times when the family had to drive from Tirana to the ‘resort cities’ while trying to keep the car from falling off a cliff and eventually arriving at some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Another thing he spoke about was trying to explore new foods. He stated,

“Food is always a motivating activity... One big part of going back is trying new foods and revisiting old food.”

During our interview, we presented the Christopher family members with travel plans such as homestays and cooking with grandmothers. As mentioned, Noel would only be interested in traveling out of the city for a day at a time, but Peter would be interested in traveling with RRNO for at least a week. However, the two found common ground in their reasons for being interested in RRNO’s tourism: food and Albanian culture. Even as a third-generation member of the diaspora, Noel still desires a deeper connection to Albania and wants to learn more about the country and his heritage by visiting.



**Two locals in a rural area cooking a traditional meal
Photo taken by Peter Christopher**

Finding #8:

Young Albanian professionals are interested in exploring the culinary tourism scene in Albania.

Over the course of our project, we interviewed four young Albanian professionals to understand their perspectives on the current culinary tourism scene in Albania and the surrounding countries. They mentioned how much the rural tourism market is growing in Albania and how much room for improvement there is which aligns with the views of the experts we noted in the background section. RRNO and other organizations such as GIZ and the 100 Villages Program, are encouraging agrotourism and aiding the rural economy and food systems. Among the professionals we spoke with, most felt that they were well-acquainted with the culinary traditions of their own region of Albania, but that there was still more to learn about the cuisine of other regions of the country. They noted that in their experience in Albania, they have observed many Albanian tourists go to beaches or bars; they would like to see more engagement in visiting the rural areas of the country.

Although Albanians in Albania were not the primary target audience for RRNO, it seemed that this demographic does have interest in the ideas RRNO is promoting as it provides new options for them to explore culinary traditions that they are not familiar with.

Key Informant Interviews

Gent
Gjuta

A young Albanian professional employed as a civil engineer from Kukës, Albania and now located in Tirana..

Klea
Troka

A young first-generation Albanian currently pursuing her master's degree in health services. She currently lives in Georgia but was previously working in Tirana.

Petra, a young Albanian professional who lived in Albania for almost her entire life, now works in the U.S. as a software engineer. Even though she lived in Albania for many years, she would like to explore new regions and try new types of food. She is very interested in returning to Albania; while it is not possible due to having to keep up with her busy work schedule, she said that *"If it were up to me, I would be in Albania for a month, two times a year."*

Another young Albanian professional we met is Klea Troka, a medical doctor who is studying public health in the U.S. on a Fulbright scholarship. She also is very interested in taking part in culinary tourism, especially in the northern region of Albania since she has lived for all her life in central Albania. She typically visited the southern part of the country when travelling. Even though these young professionals live in Albania (or had lived there for most of their lives), they still have not experienced every region of the country or sampled the food from these areas.

"North Macedonian bakeries are very well known so bread is in many dishes. In Kosovo, meat is popular. People say 'this lamb is from Kosovo' not because of where it is from but because of the way they cook it."

Gent Gjuta

Finding #9:

Members of the Albanian diaspora are interested in culinary tourism as a part of their travel, rather than exclusively focusing on culinary tourism.

We found that many of our survey participants were interested in pursuing culinary tourism activities such as visiting restaurants and cooking alongside locals, but that a small amount of them had traveled for these reasons in the past. Rather, these activities were generally something that they did while traveling for other reasons such as visiting family, friends, and traveling to beaches. Our survey results showed that most participants, regardless of age, take part in many different activities when they return to Albania. Of all respondents in our survey that have traveled to Albania or the surrounding countries, only 32% indicated that they had traveled for reasons related to food or culinary tourism in the past. Although interview participants said that while they are interested in culinary tourism, they would not focus all their time just on these activities. Culinary tourism would just be one aspect of their trip.

Figure 4.16 shows how the different activities people have done in previous trips. This suggests that tourists are not limiting themselves to one activity. Rather, they want to explore the destination as much as they can. Interview participants also mentioned this. When we asked them what they do when they travel to Albania, their responses generally encompassed many different activities.

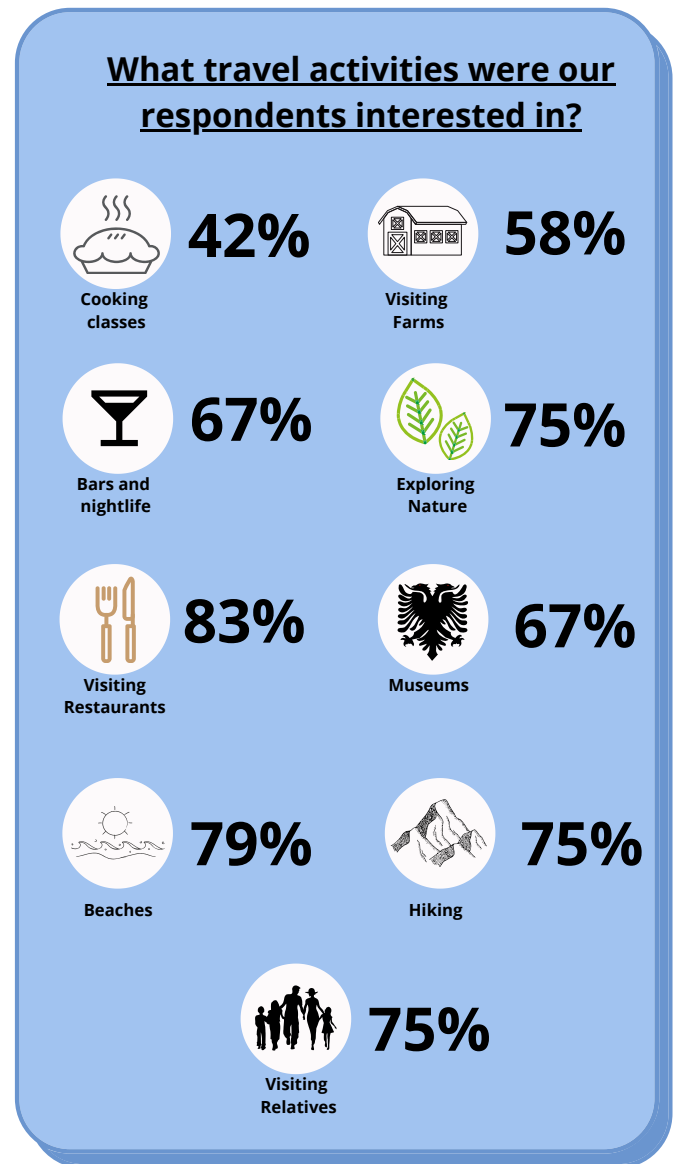


Figure 4.16: Older and younger generations' interest in various tourist activities

For example, the Martini family mentioned going on hikes, seeing nature that they were unable to see when they lived in Albania, as well as going to the beaches and bars. These are just some of activities the Martini family mentioned and it shows that culinary tourism, although very popular, is not the only motivation for travel.



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Figure 5.1: A dish of tavë peshku
Photo from Matthias Haupt

LIMITATIONS

We would like to point out some of the limitations to our findings. We were not able to collect enough completed responses to make our survey statistically significant. Some of our questions were not clear and some respondents failed to answer the questions. We expanded the demographic for our project beyond the 18- to 35-year-old, second-generation Albanian Americans that were our original target demographic. Therefore, we feel it would be best to treat this survey as a beta test for future survey construction, analysis, and distribution and to alter it using our own analyses and the opinions of our interview participants.

CONCLUSION

The RRNO Foundation and our sponsor, Nikolin Kola, wanted to know more about the current interest in culinary tourism among second generation members of the Albanian diaspora. Through our survey results, interviews, and family profiles we learned that RRNO's initiatives resonate with the Albanian diaspora. For many, culinary tourism is a means to revisit memories of family life in Albania. For others, food is a way share those memories across generations. Food not only deepens people's connection to Albania, but learning how to cook a family recipe in a village is something many of our respondents want to experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that RRNO expand its target demographic to contain all members of the Albanian diaspora, in addition to young Albanian professionals living in Albania.

- Expand the target demographic to include first- and third-generation members of the diaspora.
- Expand the target demographic beyond the 18-35 year old age range to include all ages and use the following age ranges in a revised survey to capture the motivations and constraints for different age groups: (18-25 young adults, 26-35 young parents, 36-45 parents, 46-55 older parents, 56-64 young grandparents, or 65-79 grandparents, 80+ older grandparents)
- Identify the incentives and constraints for travel and culinary tourism for parents with young children compared to those with older children who are likely to be more independent.
- Expand the target demographic to include young Albanian professionals still living in Albania or the surrounding areas.
 - If participants still live in Albania, or surrounding areas, where do they live?

An example of the new survey pathing is shown in Figure 5.2 on the following page, indicating the different paths a survey participant can answer based on whether they are a first-generation Albanian.

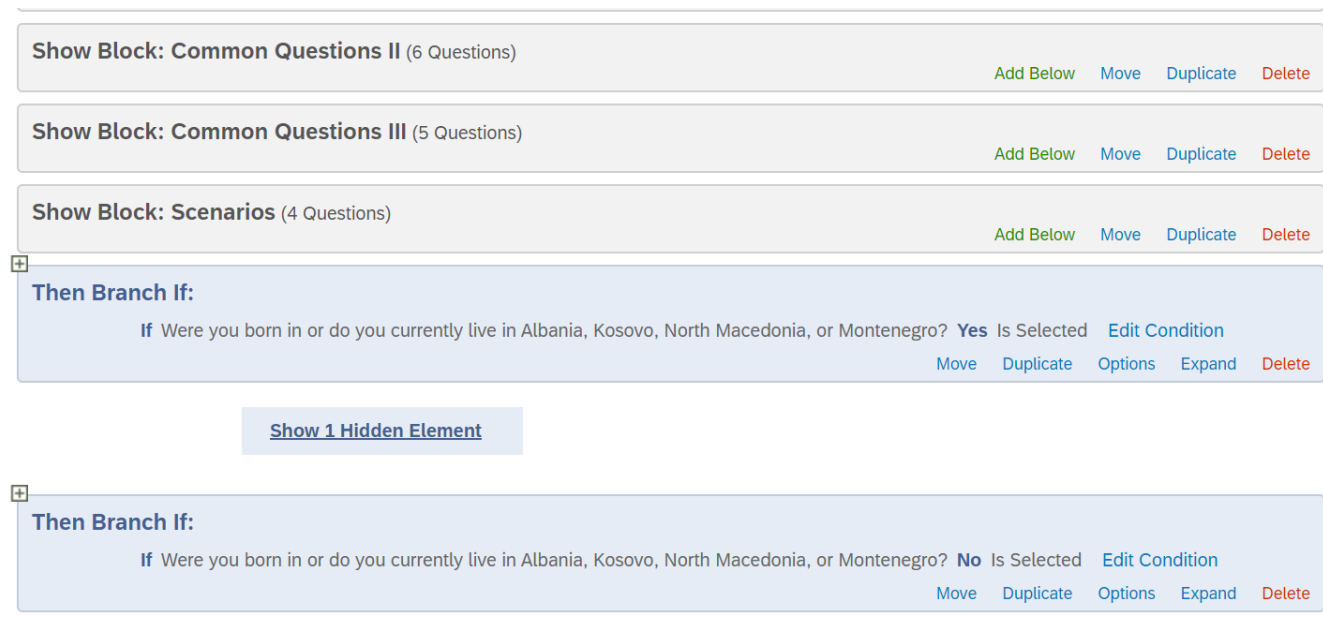


Figure 5.2: An example of the new branching structure of the survey, now differentiating between first-generation and second-/third-generation respondents

We recommend that RRNO create programs that highlight the differences in cuisine between the different regions of Albania.

- RRNO's should create itineraries that enable members of the diaspora to experience food practices, recipes, and culinary traditions from multiple regions in Albania.
- RRNO should develop programs to encourage group-based travel of members of the diaspora who could visit villages and regions and form lasting friendships through food.

We recommend that RRNO expand its ideas of culinary tourism plans to include both nuclear and multi-generational extended families.

- Provide options for single-day tourism activities for families of young children.
- When considering group activities, focus on families as well as on groups comprised of similar-aged individuals from the diaspora.
- Our interview participants consistently stated that family played a large role in their connection to Albanian culture and culinary traditions and that they would like to experience culinary tourism along with their family.

We recommend that RRNO use an updated survey that eliminates problems we discovered in the survey used in this project.

- Rework multiple-part questions into separate questions to avoid confusion and ensure the survey collects the data correctly.
- Make the demographic and branching questions required so that participants cannot skip to the very end without answering any questions.
- Make all numerical questions that have text inputs into other forms of responses such as sliders, Likert scales, or semantic differential scales.
- Ensure that all possible responses for each question are clear, concise, and specific so participants understand each option and it fully explains RRNO's ideas.

Our redesigned survey can be found in Appendix E with all of these changes included.



APPENDICES

Figure 6.1: A traditional Albanian dish
(Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook)

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Figure 6.2: A stream in Debar, North Macedonia
(Photo from albanian.expedition Facebook)

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Introduction

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to participate in this survey! We are a group of students from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts working on a project about culinary tourism in rural Albania, Kosova, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Culinary tourism is a form of tourism in which food plays a principal role for travel; visiting restaurants, farms, cooking with local grandmothers, participating in village tours, and stay-aways are all common examples. We are working with the Albanian foundation RRNO. The foundation has asked us to help it better understand the interests and perspectives of members of the Albanian diaspora with regards to rural culinary tourism so that they can correctly identify the correct target audience of tourists. We are interested in your attitudes towards food tourism as well as to Albania in general. As Covid-19 has limited travel, please base your responses on your travel before the pandemic.

Thank you again for your help with this survey! All responses to this survey will be 100% anonymous. If you have any questions, please direct your email to gr-marketidentification-A20@wpi.edu; this will send an email to all members of the group researching the survey results.

Facebook Post Introduction

Have you ever visited the village where your family came from? What is a typical dish from this area? We are working on a project to empower rural communities through culinary tourism and your perspective is very valuable. We, the RRNO Foundation, are partnering with the Albanian Project Center at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (@WPI) on a short survey.

Take the survey here: http://wpi.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9QwHshL5dEk6PCB

Share this with your family, friends, and other members of the Diaspora!

Demographic Questions

1. Please select your gender:
Male, Female, Nonbinary, Other, I prefer not to say.
2. How old are you?
3. Where in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia is your mother's (or grandmother) side of the family from?
 - a. Is it rural or urban?
4. Where in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia is your father's (or grandfather) side of the family from?
 - a. Is it rural or urban?
5. What generation Albanian are you?
1st Generation - Born in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia
2nd Generation – Child of a first-generation Albanian
3rd Generation – Grandchild of a first-generation Albanian
6. In what year did your family most recently emigrate from Albania or a surrounding country?
1880-1930, 1931-1960, 1961-1990, 1991-2001, 2001-present
7. In what state/province do you currently live?

Branching Question

At this question, the survey branches out depending on the demographic into which the participant falls.

1. Please choose your age range and whether you have children.
18-35 and don't have children, 18-35 and have children, 36+ and don't have children, 36+ and have children

Branch 1: 18-35 without children, 36+ with children

1. Which of the following countries have you visited in the past? Please check as many as may apply.
Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, I have not visited any of these countries
2. How often have you visited Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia?
Never, once, twice, several times but not yearly, yearly, multiple times a year
3. How many weeks in a year do you normally travel for vacation (unaffected by Covid-19)?
4. If you were to travel to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia, which of the following would you feel comfortable traveling with? Please select as many as apply.
Family, friends, groups of people your age, other members of the Albanian diaspora, alone
5. How many people do you typically travel with on long vacations that require extensive travel?
6. Of the following, which travel activities do you think you would enjoy? Please select as many as apply.
Taking Albanian cooking classes, Hiking, Visiting restaurants, Visiting farms and engaging in agro-tourism, Visiting beaches, Bars and nightlife, Spending time in nature, Spending time with relatives in the area, Visiting Museums

7. Of the following, select which types of tourism you are interested in? Select as many as apply.

- High end culinary tourism (i.e. Exploring new wineries, breweries, restaurants,)
- Beach tourism (Tourism that focuses on coastal areas and activities at the beach, such as sunbathing, going in the ocean, and beachside restaurants and bars)
- Urban tourism (Tourism that focuses on cities and involves activities such as museums, visiting monuments, and shopping centers)
- Adventure tourism (i.e. hiking, ziplining, off-road driving)
- Rural culinary tourism (home-stays, farming, cooking with grandmothers)

8. If you have returned to/visited Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro, what were your motivations? Select as many as apply.

- Family, Friends, Vacation, Work, Food and Culinary Activities, Outdoor Activities, Cultural experience (e.g., visiting castles or rural villages), Historical experience (e.g., visiting museums or monuments), To visit where you/your family grew up, Have not visited Albania, Other (please enter)

9. How closely do you feel connected to Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very disconnected, to 5, very connected. If you are indifferent, please respond with 3.

- Family history, Food, Language, Music/Song/Dance, Literature, Holidays/Traditions

10. What do you do for work or school?

- Full-time student in high school or university
- Part time student (i.e. Night classes with full time job)
- Part-time employee
- Full-time employee
- Unemployed

11. In your current circumstances (if Covid-19 were not a consideration), do you have enough time with school or work to take a vacation for ten or more days?

- Yes/no

12. How willing in your present circumstances (ignoring Covid-19) would you be with traveling for the following amounts of time? (Semantic Differential Scale: Extremely unwilling --> Extremely willing)

- One week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks

Branch 2: 18-35 with children

1. Which of the following countries have you visited in the past? Please check as many as may apply.

Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, I have not visited any of these countries

2. How often have you visited Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia?

Never, once, twice, several times but not yearly, yearly, multiple times a year

3. How many weeks in a year do you normally travel for vacation (unaffected by Covid-19)?

4. If you were to travel to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia, which of the following would you feel comfortable traveling with? Please select as many as apply.

Family, friends, groups of people your age, other members of the Albanian diaspora, alone

5. How many people do you typically travel with on long vacations that require extensive travel?

6. Of the following, which travel activities do you think you would enjoy? Please select as many as apply.

Taking Albanian cooking classes, Hiking, Visiting restaurants, Visiting farms and engaging in agro-tourism, Visiting beaches, Bars and nightlife, Spending time in nature, Spending time with relatives in the area, Visiting Museums

7. Of the following, select which types of tourism you are interested in? Select as many as apply.

High end culinary tourism (i.e. Exploring new wineries, breweries, restaurants,)

Beach tourism (Tourism that focuses on coastal areas and activities at the beach, such as sunbathing, going in the ocean, and beachside restaurants and bars)

Urban tourism (Tourism that focuses on cities and involves activities such as museums, visiting monuments, and shopping centers)

Adventure tourism (i.e. hiking, ziplining, off-road driving)

Rural culinary tourism (home-stays, farming, cooking with grandmothers)

8. If you have returned to/visited Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro, what were your motivations? Select as many as apply.

Family, Friends, Vacation, Work, Food and Culinary Activities, Outdoor Activities, Cultural experience (e.g., visiting castles or rural villages), Historical experience (e.g., visiting museums or monuments), To visit where you/your family grew up, Have not visited Albania, Other (please enter)

9. How closely do you feel connected to Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very disconnected, to 5, very connected. If you are indifferent, please respond with 3.

Family history, Food, Language, Music/Song/Dance, Literature, Holidays/Traditions

10. What do you do for work or school?

Full-time student in high school or university

Part time student (i.e. Night classes with full time job)

Part-time employee

Full-time employee

Unemployed

11. In your current circumstances (if Covid-19 were not a consideration), do you have enough time with school or work to take a vacation for ten or more days?

Yes/no

12. How willing in your present circumstances (ignoring Covid-19) would you be with traveling for the following amounts of time? (Semantic Differential Scale: Extremely unwilling --> Extremely willing)

One week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks

13. If you have children living with you (regardless of age), how many weeks of vacation do they generally have per year?

14. How much do you agree with the following sentence? "I strongly influence my children to explore Albanian culture." Please respond on a scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.

15. How much do you believe you influence your children in context of Albanian culture in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very influential, to 5, very uninformal.

Family history, Food, Language, Music/Song/Dance, Literature, Holidays/Traditions

16. Do you feel that family is the main influence on your children learning about Albania? (Likert Scale: 1 – Very unconfident --> 5 – Very Confident)

Branch 3: 36+ with children

1. Which of the following countries have you visited in the past? Please check as many as may apply.
Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, I have not visited any of these countries
2. How often have you visited Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia?
Never, once, twice, several times but not yearly, yearly, multiple times a year
3. Traveling with my children is... (Semantic Differential Scale)
Cheap --> Expensive
Easy --> Difficult
Relaxed --> Chaotic
Amusement --> Education
4. Have you returned with your children to the place where you or your most recent family in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro grew up?
Yes/no
5. In the future, how likely are you to return along with your children to the place where you or your most recent family in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro grew up? Please indicate your answer between 1, very unlikely, and 5, very likely.
6. If you have returned to/visited Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro, what were your motivations? Select as many as apply.
Family, Friends, Vacation, Work, Food and Culinary Activities, Outdoor Activities, Cultural experience (e.g., visiting castles or rural villages), Historical experience (e.g., visiting museums or monuments), To visit where you/your family grew up, Have not visited Albania, Other (please enter)
7. How much do you agree with the following sentence? "I strongly influence my children to explore Albanian culture." Please respond on a scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.
8. How much do you believe you influence your children in context of Albanian culture in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very influential, to 5, very uninfluential.
Family history, Food, Language, Music/Song/Dance, Literature, Holidays/Traditions
9. Do you feel that family is the main influence on your children learning about Albania? (Likert Scale: 1 – Very unconfident --> 5 – Very Confident)

10. To what degree do you maintain contact with family members still living in Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, or North Macedonia?

Slider question from 0, not at all, to 100, regularly

11. If you have children living with you (regardless of age), how many weeks of vacation do they generally have per year?

12. How willing in your present circumstances (ignoring Covid-19) would you be with traveling for the following amounts of time? (Semantic Differential Scale: Extremely unwilling --> Extremely willing)

One week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks

Scenario Questions

10. To what degree do you maintain contact with family members still living in Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, or North Macedonia?

Slider question from 0, not at all, to 100, regularly

11. If you have children living with you (regardless of age), how many weeks of vacation do they generally have per year?

12. How willing in your present circumstances (ignoring Covid-19) would you be with traveling for the following amounts of time? (Semantic Differential Scale: Extremely unwilling --> Extremely willing)

One week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks

Invitation to Follow Up With Survey Participants

1. If you are interested in an interview with us to further elaborate on your experiences and opinions towards Albanian gastronomy, please check 'yes' on this question.

2. Please leave your name below if you are interested in a follow up interview.

3. Please leave your email below if you are interested in a follow up interview.

Closing Text

Thank you again for taking the time out of your day to take our survey! If you are interested in learning more about RRNO as an organization, please feel free to visit their social media and website. They are as follows:

Website: rrno.al

Facebook: [albanian.expedition](https://www.facebook.com/albanian.expedition)

Instagram: [albanian.expedition](https://www.instagram.com/albanian.expedition)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. Please introduce yourself and let us know what generation Albanian you are (will detail the definitions of each generation if necessary).**
- 2. When/if you return to Albania, do you visit family and friends, or is it just a vacation destination? When was the last time you visited?**
- 3. Do you have intentions of traveling back to Albania? Why or why not?**
- 4. (Only if the person seems comfortable about the idea) If you are comfortable, can you explain your reasons for leaving, or your family's reasoning?**
- 5. How would you describe your connection to Albania? (probes: What are some things your parents or grandparents did to help this? If not, can you explain why you feel disconnected?)**
- 6. Is there a food that reminds you of your childhood? Or when you lived in Albania?**
- 7. How would you describe your family's connection to Albania?**
- 8. Have you engaged in culinary tourism in the past? What sorts of activities did you participate in?**
- 9. (After describing RRNO as an organization and its objectives) Would you be interested in the rural culinary tourism that RRNO is setting out to promote? Why or why not? Ask about each theoretical scenario from the survey.**

APPENDIX C: SURVEY MEDIA

Examples of Survey Questions

Multiple Choice Example

What generation Albanian are you?

- First-generation Albanian (You were born in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro)
- Second-generation Albanian (One of your parents was born in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro)
- Third-generation Albanian (One of your grandparents was born in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro)
- More distant than third-generation

Multiple Selection Example

Which of the following countries have you visited in the past? Please check as many as may apply.

- Albania
- Kosovo
- North Macedonia
- Montenegro
- I have not visited any of these countries

Free Response Example

In what country and state/province do you currently live?

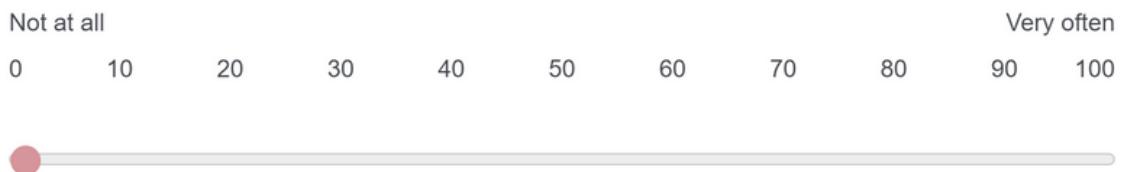
Likert Scale Example

How closely do you feel connected to Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very disconnected, to 5, very connected. If you are indifferent, please respond with 3.

	1 - Very disconnected	2 - Moderately disconnected	3 - Indifferent	4 - Moderately connected	5 - Very Connected
Family history	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music, song, and dance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Literature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Holidays and traditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Slider Example

To what degree do you maintain contact with family members still living in Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, or North Macedonia?



Semantic Differential Scale Example

Travelling with my children is...

Cheap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Expensive
Easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Difficult
Relaxed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Chaotic
Amusement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Education

Social Media Post

Initial Facebook Post

 **RRNO** Yesterday at 11:21 AM · 🌐

Have you ever visited the village where your family came from? What is a typical dish from this area? We are working on a project to empower rural communities through culinary tourism and your perspective is very valuable. We, the RRNO Foundation, are partnering with the Albanian Project Center at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) on a short survey.

Please take the survey here:
http://wpi.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9QwHshL5dEk6PCB ✓

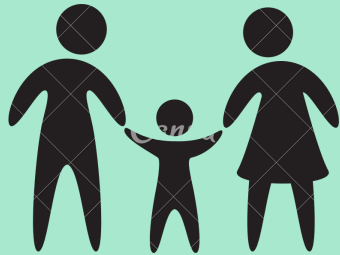
Share this with your family, friends, an... See More



APPENDIX D: INFOGRAPHICS

The following pages contain the infographics we generated from the preliminary results of our beta test survey. We felt that these were the most important statistics to include, and made three versions: one focusing on cultural connection to Albania, another referring to general travel preferences, and the final referring to culinary tourism interest.

Cultural Connection to Albania



83%

of parents agree that they are the main influence in growing Albanian culture in the lives of their children

What connects participants to Albanian culture?

70%- Family History

52%- Food

52%- Language



95%

of participants still remain in contact with family/friends living in Albania or surrounding areas



TRAVEL PREFERENCES

Market Identification

PREFERRED TRAVEL GROUP

83% like to travel with family
79% like to travel with friends



PREFERRED LENGTH OF TRAVEL

86% of the participants between ages 18-35 would want to travel for at least 10 days

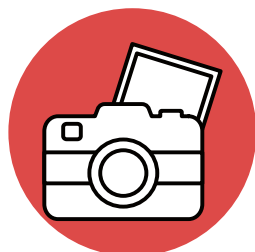
RATE OF RETURN TO ALBANIA OR SURROUNDING AREAS

71% of participants have returned 3 or more times



MOST POPULAR MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVEL TO ALBANIA OR SURROUNDING AREAS

62.5% like to visit family
59% like to go on vacation
46% like to visit where they/family grew up.



INTEREST IN VARIOUS TYPES OF TOURISM (18-35)

65% are interested in Rural culinary tourism
62% are interested in Beach tourism
62% are interested in High-end culinary tourism



CULINARY TOURISM INTEREST



71.4%

INTERESTED IN

- SUMMER CAMPS
- STAY-AWAYS
- NANA COOKING

73.9%

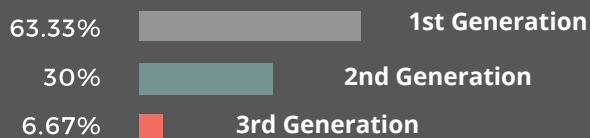
PEOPLE BETWEEN AGES 18-35 HAVE AN INTEREST IN RURAL CULINARY TOURISM

23.5%

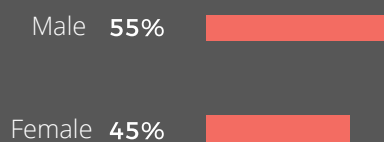
HAVE PARTICIPATED IN CULINARY TOURISM IN THE PAST



WHAT GENERATION THE RESPONDENTS WERE



SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



PREPARED BY THE MARKET IDENTIFICATION TEAM

APPENDIX E: REVISED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Introduction

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to participate in this survey! We are a group of students from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts working on a project about culinary tourism in rural Albania, Kosova, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Culinary tourism is a form of tourism in which food plays a principal role for travel; visiting restaurants, farms, cooking with local grandmothers, participating in village tours, and stay-aways are all common examples. We are working with the Albanian foundation RRNO. The foundation has asked us to help it better understand the interests and perspectives of members of the Albanian diaspora with regards to rural culinary tourism so that they can correctly identify the correct target audience of tourists. We are interested in your attitudes towards food tourism as well as to Albania in general. As Covid-19 has limited travel, please base your responses on your travel before the pandemic.

Thank you again for your help with this survey! All responses to this survey will be 100% anonymous. If you have any questions, please direct your email to gr-marketidentification-A20@wpi.edu; this will send an email to all members of the group researching the survey results.

Demographic Questions

Introduction: This portion of the survey will ask you some quick demographic questions.

1. Please select your gender:
Male, Female, Nonbinary, Other, I prefer not to say.
2. How old are you?
3. In what city/town in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro did your mother's side of your family come from?
4. Is your mother's side of the family's hometown rural or urban?
5. In what city/town in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro did your father's side of your family come from?
6. Is your father's side of the family's hometown rural or urban?
7. What generation Albanian are you?
First-generation Albanian [You were born in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro], Second-generation Albanian [One of your parents was born in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro], Third-generation Albanian [One of your grandparents was born in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro], More distant than third-generation
8. In what country and state/province do you currently live?
9. In what year did your family most recently emigrate from Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro?
1880-1940, 1941-1960, 1961-1990, 1991-2001, 2002-present

Branching Indicators

Introduction: This portion of the survey asks some questions that will personalize later sections of your survey based on your unique demographic. Please note that these questions are **required** to continue the survey.

1. Were you born in or do you currently live in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro?
Yes, no
2. Do you have children?
Yes, no
3. Please select your age range.
18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 65-79, 80+

Common Questions

Page 1 Introduction: This section of the survey will focus on your travel patterns **prior to Covid-19**. Please do not take account of travel restrictions due to the pandemic into consideration when filling out these questions. To clarify, a member of the Albanian diaspora is a person of Albanian descent that is no longer living in Albania.

1. Which of the following countries have you visited in the past? Please check as many as may apply.
Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, I have not visited any of these countries
2. How often have you visited Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia?
Never, once, twice, several times but not yearly, yearly, multiple times a year
3. If you have returned to/visited Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro, what were your motivations? Select as many as apply.
Family, Friends, Vacation, Work, Food and Culinary Activities, Outdoor Activities, Cultural experience (e.g., visiting castles or rural villages), Historical experience (e.g., visiting museums or monuments), To visit where you/your family grew up, Have not visited Albania, Other (please enter)

Page 2 Introduction: These questions will focus on your time availability for travel. As before, please do not take Covid-19 restrictions into consideration.

4. What do you do for work or school? Please select as many as apply.
Full-time student, part-time student, part-time employee, full-time employee, retired, other [please enter]
5. In your current circumstances (if Covid-19 were not a consideration), do you have enough time with school or work to take a vacation for ten or more days?
Yes, no
6. How willing in your present circumstances (ignoring Covid-19) would you be traveling for the following amounts of time?
Semantic Differential Scale from Extremely unwilling to Extremely willing, for the time lengths of one, two, three, and four weeks

7. How many weeks in a year do you normally travel for vacation (unaffected by Covid-19)?

Slider from 0 to 10+ weeks

8. How many people do you typically travel with on long vacations that require extensive (more than a week) travel?

Slider from 0 to 10+ people

Page 3 Introduction: These questions focus on your connection to Albania and the surrounding countries, as well as your interest in RRNO's tourism strategies. As before, please answer these questions without taking Covid-19 travel restrictions into consideration.

9. How closely do you feel connected to Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very disconnected, to 5, very connected. If you are indifferent, please respond with 3.

Food, family history, literature, music/song/dance, language, holidays/traditions

10. Of the following, which types of tourism do you think you would be interested in? Please select as many as apply.

Beach tourism [i.e. Tourism that focuses on coastal areas and activities at the beach, such as sunbathing, going in the ocean, and beachside restaurants and bars]

Urban tourism [i.e. Tourism that focuses on cities and involves activities such as museums, shopping centers, and visiting monuments]

Adventure tourism [i.e. hiking, ziplining, off-road driving]

Rural culinary tourism [i.e. farms, homestays, and stay-aways]

High-end culinary tourism [i.e. Exploring new wineries, breweries, restaurants]

11. Of the following, which travel activities do you think you would enjoy? Please select as many as apply.

Cooking alongside local Albanian grandmothers, visiting farms and pursuing agritourism, visiting restaurants, visiting bars and engaging in nightlife, spending time in nature, visiting museums, visiting family in the area, hiking, visiting beaches

12. If you were to travel to Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro, which of the following would you feel comfortable traveling with? Please select as many as apply.

Family, friends, a group of members of the Albanian diaspora around your age, alone

Scenario Questions

Introduction: In this section, you will receive multiple prompts about possible vacations and activities in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia. Please rank the following scenarios in terms of your interest of experiencing them [with your children], with 1 being very uninterested and 5 being very interested.

- 1.** Scenario 1: On this trip you would be partaking in a homestay in a rural village in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia. While there, you would be participating in tasks that the locals carry out daily. These tasks could include things such as: tending to animals, harvesting crops and enjoying traditional meals cooked by the locals you would be staying with.
- 2.** Scenario 2: In this activity you would be learning how to prepare traditional Albanian cuisine alongside local grandmothers in a rural village in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, or North Macedonia.
- 3.** Scenario 3: In this activity you would be at a summer camp with other people of your age of Albanian origin from around the world and learning about Albanian culture through food, song, dance, and learning about history.

First-Generation Albanian Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you were born in or currently live in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro.

- 1.** Which of the following regions of Albania have you visited in the past? Please select as many as apply.
Northern [Shkodër, Kukës, Dibër, Lezhë, or Durrës], Central [Tirana or Elbasan], Southern [Fier, Berat, Korçë, Gjirokastër, or Vlorë]
- 2.** How familiar are you with the cuisine of the following regions of Albania?
Choices of not familiar, somewhat familiar, and very familiar for the northern, central, and southern regions

3. How willing would you be to travel somewhere in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro that you have never been before? Please indicate on the following scale, with 1 being very unwilling and 5 being very willing.
4. How willing would you be to travel somewhere in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro that you have frequently been before? Please indicate on the following scale, with 1 being very unwilling and 5 being very willing.

Second- and Third-Generation Albanian Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you were not born in and do not currently live in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro.

1. Have you returned to the place where you or your most recent family in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro grew up?
Yes, no
2. In the future, how likely are you to travel to the place where you or your most recent family in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, or Montenegro grew up? Please indicate your answer between 1, very unlikely, and 5, very likely.
3. To what degree do you maintain contact with family members still living in Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, or North Macedonia?
Slider from not at all to extremely frequently

Parent Albanian Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you have children.

1. Traveling with my children is...
(Semantic differential with the ranges cheap -> expensive, relaxing -> chaotic, easy -> difficult, amusement -> education)
2. Do you feel that family is the main influence on your children learning about Albania?
Likert with 1 – Very unconfident, 5 – very confident
3. How much do you agree with the following sentence? "I strongly influence my children to explore Albanian culture." Please respond on a scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.

4. How do you preserve Albanian culture in your family in the following ways? Please reply on the scale from 1, being very influential, to 5, very uninfluential.

Food, family history, literature, music/song/dance, language, holidays/traditions

5. How many weeks of vacation do your children generally have per year?

Slider from 0 to 10+ weeks

6. Do you currently have children living with you? If so, how many?

Yes/enter, no

7. How old are your children?

18 - 25 Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you are between 18 and 25 years old.

1. Of the following, which currently take up significant amounts of time in your daily life? Please select as many as apply.

Education, work, personal time [i.e. reading, playing games, etc.], caring for family, travel, other [please enter]

Food, family history, literature, music/song/dance, language, holidays/traditions

2. Are you currently living with your parents?

Yes, no

3. If you are currently studying at a school/university, is there an Albanian cultural organization?

Yes, no, not currently enrolled at a school/university

26 - 35 Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you are between 26 and 35 years old.

1. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I have had less time to travel as I've grown older."

Semantic differential scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree

2. Are you currently living with your parents?

Yes, no

36 - 64 Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you are between 36 and 64 years old.

1. How much do you agree with the following statement? "I have had less time to travel as I've grown older."
Semantic differential scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree
2. How much of a presence does Albanian culture have in your household?
Not present, fairly present, extremely present
3. In what ways do you maintain Albanian culture in your household? Please select as many as apply.
Food, decorations, language, literature, holidays, other [please specify]

65+ Questions

Introduction: You are being asked these questions as you signified that you are 65 years or older.

1. How much of a presence does Albanian culture have in your household?
Not present, fairly present, extremely present
2. In what ways do you maintain Albanian culture in your household? Please select as many as apply.
Food, decorations, language, literature, holidays, other [please specify]
3. As you have grown older, how has traveling changed for you as compared to while you were younger?
Semantic differential scale from easier to more difficult, cheaper to more expensive, less time consuming to more time consuming, less manageable to more manageable
4. If you have grandchildren, which of the following travel activities would you like to pursue with them? Please select as many as apply.
Visiting restaurants, cooking with Albanian chefs, visiting where you or your family grew up, spending time in nature, participating in stayaways, visiting relatives, I do not have grandchildren

Closer

Introduction: Thank you very much for taking the time out of your day to take our survey! We really appreciate it. If possible, it would be a lot of help if you shared this survey with other members of your family so that we can see the perspective of multiple generations of members of the Albanian diaspora. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to us at gr-MarketIdentification-A20@wpi.edu.

1. If you are interested in an interview with us to further elaborate on your experiences and opinions towards Albanian gastronomy, please check 'yes' on this question.
2. Please leave your name below if you are interested in a follow up interview.
3. Please leave your email below if you are interested in a follow up interview.

Closing statement:

Thank you again for taking the time out of your day to take our survey! If you are interested in learning more about RRNO as an organization, please feel free to visit their social media and website. They are as follows:

Website: rrno.al

Facebook: [albanian.expedition](https://www.facebook.com/albanian.expedition)

Instagram: [albanian.expedition](https://www.instagram.com/albanian.expedition)