

EVALUATING TOURISM SECTOR IN ALBANIA BY THE VIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

It is clear that there are different studies conducted on the tourism sector of different countries. In contrast, it is quite difficult to find out similar studies that conducted on Albanian tourism sector that is revealed by the literature review of this study. This is one of the main motivations of this study.

The purpose of this study is to measure the views and perception of university students on the issue on the basis of empirical data which have been collected for this study. The researchers asked about 24 questions to universities' students. Before conducting the survey, the study had chosen two private and five state run universities from different cities of Albania. The survey conducted by surveyor who had been thought how to conduct survey. These surveyors asked those some 423 students to fill in the survey's questions. After they answered the questions, the surveys had been collected by those surveyors. To investigate which factors have more importance on development of tourism sector including Infrastructure, Transportation, Diversity of Tourism, Promotion, Service Quality and Price.

The study are adopting the hypothesis that mean factor ratings are same between male and female, universities and employment status.

This study has employed a quantitative method. Within this method, in order to analyse the data Oneway Anova Tests is applied. Based on the analysis all factors that has been asked are found as important, however, their contribution level to the tourism development are different. Among factors contributing to tourism, Promotion is considered to have different level of contribution according to different universities' students, while evaluation of factors on other demographic indicators is seen similar within significance level 0.05.

Keywords: *Tourism, Albanian Economy, Albanian Tourism Sector, Multivariate Statistical Techniques.*

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Introduction

Tourism sector is one of the major sectors in the service sector of any country. The service sector proportion in an economy shows and gives an inference about the development of countries. Generally this proportion is over than 60-65 % in developed economies. Among the other sectors in services, like transportation, banking and others, tourism has also importance place to affect the economy.

Concerning Albania, it seems that this service sector might have considerable amount of weight in her economy on the one hand. On the other hand, there is a difficulty to notify any development in tourism sector such as infrastructure, transportation, number of facilities, diversity of tourism, promotion and advertisement, service quality and price which are considered the key factors in the tourism sector.

The research addresses these key factors in two ways. The first one is how students think of these and what their current conditions. The second is what students' perspective about their future developments. For these, empirical data will be collected and analysed. Later on, the study will discuss these findings and analyses in order to reach a clear conclusion in term of understanding of business and political science.

The study will have a literature review on tourism in general and particular attention will be given to Albania. However, it is important to note that there is no great deal of information on Albania on aforementioned topic of the study. This is one of the reasons why the study will try to fill the gap and contributing very important information to this area of study.

The objective of this study is twofold. One is to understand view of students of Albania who will be running the country on tourism and related issues. The second is to have a clear idea what Albania has to offer in this particular sector in term of those aforementioned key sectors. In order to achieve to these, the study need to test its hypothesis. These are given below:

Hypothesis (Null):

H1: Mean factor ratings are same between male and female.

H2: Mean factor ratings are same between students' universities.

H3: Mean factor ratings are same between employment statuses.

The paper will start with background information about Albania and her economic condition including tourism and related sectors. After this part completed, the study will commence on literature review. Where the study will provide what have been studied and what needs to be studied. Then the study will move on analysing the empirical data using statistical techniques which lead the research to start with the result of these analyses. The result and discussion part will be next in this study. Finally, the study will be drawn a conclusion from the paper that include whether there is need to conduct further research on this issue.

Background Information

Albania is a Balkan country in south-eastern Europe with neighbouring countries as Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. It also borders the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea in the west. Albania has diverse natural beauty, archaeological sites and fascinating history and the culture which provides a glimpse of Mediterranean civilization from the Bronze Age.

Tourism is considered as one of the most important sector of an economy. It is considered as one of the fastest growing sector in the world economy. Especially, it has been used as a locomotive for the regional and national development. The Albanian tourism sector has started making a significant contribution to the economy of the country by the beginning of the 20th century. Nevertheless, it is still a new sector which needs an investment and significant initiatives from the both public and private parties in order to develop tourism industry in Albania. Thus, we can say that tourism sector in Albania offers infinite potential to investors to take an advantage of unexplored opportunities in tourism sector, and helping to develop this industry into a key driver in the country's economy.

There are some basic pre-conditions for tourism development which are widely discussed by international scholars who have conducted their studies on tourism sector. Sustainable Tourism development is acceptable only if the basis for the development process is friendly to environment. For example; Hunter and Green (1995) discussed the sustainable relationship between tourism and an environment. In this study authors argues the environmental quality associated to the tourism success by protecting the world's tourism destination for the future generation by assessing the impact of tourism on environment by constructing models and using international case studies in their illustrations. Similarly, Coccossis and Nijkamp (1995) are also has conducted study on sustainable tourism development. In this study authors also discussed the relationship between tourism and environment. Their studies are comprised of two part; in the first part they examines economic importance of tourism sector where in the second part they presents the tools for policy making with regard to tourism and the environment.

Provision of infrastructure is considered as the backbone of development of any economy. Therefore, anticipated growth of an economy exerts more pressure on the infrastructure facilities in subsectors like energy, transportation, communication and water resources management. These facilities of the infrastructure sector bare two main objectives in the long-term: (1) to support needs of a population in a best way in all meanings, (2) to support the productive sector. According to data gathered by the World Bank in Europe and Central Asia 145 airport projects in transportation sector was carried with private sector participation worldwide between 1991 and 2011, a total of 30 airport infrastructure projects were carried out with the total value of investments of US\$ 11,829 million, where US\$ 2,386 million was only for

construction of terminal and US\$ 9,443 million for runway constructions³⁰⁷, in the energy sector 340 projects with the total amount of US\$ 105,023 million³⁰⁸, 292 projects in telecommunication³⁰⁹ sector with the total amount of US\$ 157,601 million and 44 water³¹⁰ resources projects amounting for US\$ 3,781 million. Specifically, among these infrastructure investment projects in Europe and Central Asia, in Albania was held 15 projects with total amount of US\$ 2,456 million among which 7 projects in energy for US\$ 720 million, 4 projects in telecom sector for US\$ 1,421, 1 project in transportation sector (airport) for US\$ 308 million and 3 projects in water resources sector for US\$ 8 million³¹¹. To recall public and private commitment are also one of the most important pre-conditions for the development of tourism. Thus, projects initiated as mentioned above likely demonstration an intention to develop tourism in Albania. Inskeep (1991) have cited the importance of infrastructure and its role for tourism. To take an example of empirical evidences, Kim et al (2000) and McElroy (2003) highlighted the importance of government financed infrastructure for the development of tourism sector. is one of the main determinants or tool for the development of the tourism. More recently, study by Seetanah et al (2011) finds that the infrastructure, income level of tourists, distance, and the relative prices are important ingredients of tourism, and argues that their study presents that the tourists are sensitive to the infrastructure.

The political stability and the security are also one of the important elements for the tourism development. Political stability is a steady condition of the political system, enabling it to function effectively and evolve under the influence of external and internal issues, while maintaining its structure and ability to control the processes of social change (Kaufmann, 2002). This represents legitimacy and the effectiveness of the government and government agencies. Thus, it can be said that the law and regulations are important tools for sustaining tourism development.

Literature Review

Study by Seetanah et.al (2011) investigates the importance of infrastructure as a factor in destination to tourism development in Mauritius Island by modelling tourist arrivals over the period 1985 – 2006 using panel data estimation techniques and

307 The World Bank Group, (2012), World Bank, Private Participation in Infrastructure Database, http://ppi.worldbank.org/explore/ppi_exploreSubSector.aspx?SubSectorID=5, [accessed date: 05.07.2012]

308 Ibid, http://ppi.worldbank.org/explore/ppi_exploreSector.aspx?sectorID=2, [accessed date:05.07.2012]

309 Ibid, http://ppi.worldbank.org/explore/ppi_exploreSector.aspx?sectorID=1, [accessed date:05.07.2012]

310 Ibid, http://ppi.worldbank.org/explore/ppi_exploreSector.aspx?sectorID=4, [accessed date:05.07.2012]

311 Ibid, http://ppi.worldbank.org/explore/ppi_exploreCountry.aspx?countryID=69, [accessed date:05.07.2012]

finds that infrastructure has positive impact on tourist arrivals, thus to tourism development. Another study by Seetanah and Khadaroo (2007) investigates the significance of transport infrastructure as a factor of destination development. Thus, transportation is included as part of demand function for the tourism. Khadaroo and Seetanah (2008) again conducted a study to evaluate the importance of transport infrastructure in international tourism. In the study it tried to determine the attractiveness of the tourist destination by gravity model approach and finds that transport infrastructure is a significance determinant in international tourism and it is vary depending on the origin and destination. Differently, Teye (2008) argues that in some places the geographical critical factors like size, climate, population distribution, and distance are important when developing tourism destination. As these factors have major influence on the occupancy level of hotels, land and air transportation.

Price

Crouch (1992) demonstrates the effect of income and price on international tourism. In the research paper author integrates the findings of other authors and investigate whether differences in the studies are account for any of the variability. The result show that the assessment of income elasticity of demand does vary depending on the methodological features of study. Falzon (2012) presents a study where it has been developed a relative price index of each Mediterranean country with respect to its average based on the Hotel package price in the Thomson summer and winter brochures. Accordingly, it is concluded that the Thomsons price presented in the brochures are unified and internally consistent, thus, it can be used as a competitive important indicator for tourism development.

Morley (1994) investigates the use of Consumer Price Index for tourism prices using different methods and data. Author indents to explore if there is a significant correlation between tourism prices and the CPI. In the study, author identifies most expenditure items of tourist in 10 important tourist destination and estimates price series for these items and finds that there is a significant correlation with the CPI and the tourism prices. Thus, concludes that it is reasonable to use CPI as a proxy for tourism prices.

Promotion

Study by Bonnet (1982) where the author considers neglected aspects of marketing and promotion of tourism development in developing countries. Similarly, Dudensig et.al (2011) argues that one of the possible reasons why some tourism-based business struggle is due to the mismatch of needs of business and economic development organizations that assists the local industry. In the study author uses a survey data from tourism promotion and economic development organizations and tourism-based businesses of Pensilvania and West Virginia and compare the perception of actors on the tourism promotion and the business challenges and finds

that the tourism-based business and economic development organizations hold similar perceptions about industry problems. Whereas the promotion agencies underestimate the role of internet in the promotion, and perceive the workforce issues more different than the business.

Service Quality

Service quality is important in tourism sector and its development. Shonk and Chelladurai (2008) measures tourist judgments on service quality using attribute based method. Additionally, linear regression and Sirgy's congruity model were adapted to measure customer satisfaction. In the study it concluded that there exist a linear relationship between tourist judgments and the service quality. Reichel et.al (2000) a presents empirical study of 206 guest and 23 entrepreneurs measuring the service quality using Gronroos's model and finds that there is a gap between expected service dimension and the experienced dimension and recommends appropriate training in management and marketing implications. Moreover, Sharpley, R and Forster, G (2003) argues that due to the competitive market the issue of quality in tourism gained significance as it has been influenced by factors like consumer rights and alleged quality conscious tourists. Authors have conducted a survey to hotel employees and identified key factors that drive towards quality service provision and concludes on the need of management strategies based on the reward and empowerment. Thus, an implications of management presented in the study of Reichel et.al may be supported by this study. Another interesting research Marin-Cejas (2006) measures service quality based on the facilities of airport using linear programming model and intends to identify indirect measure of tourist perceived satisfaction provided by check-in service and uses leisure time for tourist as relevance of this parameter.

Research Methods

Before the study has begun, the researchers thought that it would be important to understand views of universities' students on Albanian tourism sector. The reason is that these students would be running the country in the future. Their views and opinion would be included. Secondly, there was myth that Albania has a great tourism potential that needs to be academically tested.

Having these two objectives in mind, the study needs to have empirical data which have been collected for this study. A survey had been prepared (Appendix I) that included 24 questions in order to investigate which factors have more importance on development of tourism sector including Infrastructure, Transportation, Diversity of Tourism, Promotion, Service Quality and Price.

In Albania, there are 7 public and more than 45 private universities. The most of the students go to public universities. For this reason, the study had chosen two private and five state run universities from different cities of Albania. The survey conducted by surveyors who had been thought how to conduct survey. The research

ethic and research rules including code of conducts were applied during the survey. These surveyors asked prepared and printed questionnaires students who randomly chosen to fill in the survey's questions. Some 423 students have filled in the questionnaires, and then after they answered the questions, the surveys had been collected by those surveyors. The data carefully have been put into the SPSS 17 programme for investigation and analyses.

6 universities are selected, two of them private and 4 of them public among 53 universities in Albania. There are some 423 survey questionnaires that have been collected from these universities' students. Among these survey questionnaires, 15 filled forms from each university are selected by convince sampling method. 81 surveys are found appropriate for study. Descriptive Statistics are given below and One-way Anova method is applied to find whether there are differences between gender, universities and employment status, separately.

This study has employed a quantitative method. Within this method, in order to analyse the data Statistical Techniques, like Anova and Chi-Square Tests model is applied.

Analysis

Survey results are examined in this part of the study by SPSS 17 package programme. Six factors: Infrastructure, Transport, Service Quality, Price, Diversity of Tourism and Promotion (Advertisement) are used to evaluate students' opinion on factors affecting tourism sector development in Albania. Therefore, the results are given below:

Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies and percentages of demographic variables, such as gender, university, and employment status and tourism share (Opinions about Albania's Tourism Share from World Tourism Pie) are given in Table: 1, Table: 2, Table: 3 and Table: 4, respectively. Mean and standard deviation values of factors that affect tourism sector development in Albania are given in Table 5.

Frequencies of Demographic Variables:

Table: 1. Frequencies of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	35	43,2
Female	46	56,8
Total	81	100,0

Total 81 students from 6 universities selected for Survey. 35 of them (43.2 %) is Male and 46 of them (56.8 %) is Female.

Table: 2. Frequencies of University

University	Frequency	Percent
Shkoder	14	17,3
Tirana	14	17,3
Vlore	14	17,3
European	13	16,0
Polytechnic	13	16,0
Epoka	13	16,0
Total	81	100,0

Universities in the study are Luigj Gurakuqi in Shkoder (14 students), University of Tirana in Tirana (14 students), İsmail Çmimi in Vlore (14 students), European University in Tirana (13 students), Polytechnic University in Tirana (13 students) and Epoka University in Tirana (13 students). The number of students is similar from each university. However, the respondents are far greater than these numbers. These are randomly selected from the rest according to universities' respondents. So, each university has same weight in this research concerning of numbers of respondents which is important not to separate private and public university.

Table: 3. Employment

Job	Frequency	Percent
Full-time	1	1,2
Part-time	13	16,0
No	67	82,7
Total	81	100,0

Only one student has full-time job, 13 students have part-time job, other 67 students have no job. If one considers full and part-time jobs we can say 17.3% of students have a job, but 82.7 % of them have no job.

Table: 4. Tourism share of Albania

Share	Frequency	Percent
1	7	8,6
2	5	6,2
3	15	18,5
4	32	39,5
5	22	27,2
Total	81	100,0

When we examine tourism share of Albania from World Tourism Pie; it is seen that 14, 8 % of students say Albania has more than it deserved (1 show much more than it deserved and 2 shows more than it deserved). 66.7 % of students, majority of them, expressed that Albania has less than it deserved (4 and 5 show less than it deserve). 18, 5% of them express that Albania has just it deserved.

Evaluation of Factors

6 factors were asked to university students to evaluate their importance in terms of development of tourism sector in Albania. They are asked to give “1” if factor is very important as their opinion, and 2 if it is important, 0 if it is no matter, 3 if it is unimportant, lastly 5 if it is very unimportant. Each of factor’s mean is given below in the Table: 5.

As it is seen from the table, all factors are found as they have importance to develop tourism sector because they have mean values between 1 and 2. On the other hand, infrastructure is found as most important factor (by mean=1.0253) that affects development of tourism. Transportation followed it by mean is 1.2987. In third order Service Quality has more importance by mean is 1.3704, Price, Diversity of Tourism and Promotion follow it by 1.5432, 1.6875, and 1.8734, respectively.

Table: 5. Mean Importance of Factors

Factor Ranks	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1-Infrastructure	79	1,0253	,15809
2-Transport	77	1,2987	,46069
3-Service Quality	64	1,3704	,64118
4-Price	79	1,5432	,59265
5-Diversity of Tourism	81	1,6875	,88864
6-Promotion	81	1,8734	,89682

Comparisons of Factors in Terms of Gender, University and Employment Status

We applied One-way Anova test to analyse whether meaningful differences are there in terms of factor means or not between subgroups of gender, university and employment status, separately.

Gender & Factors

We applied One-way Anova test to analyse whether meaningful differences between male and female opinions about factor importance on development of tourism sector in Albania.

Hypothesis:

H1: Mean factor ratings are same between male and female.

In terms of ANOVA results any meaningful differences are seen between male and female due to all factors.

University & Factors

One-way Anova test is applied to analyse whether meaningful differences between 6 different universities' students opinions about factor importance on development of tourism sector in Albania.

Hypothesis:

H2: Mean factor ratings are same between different university students.

In terms of ANOVA results only statistically meaningful differences is seen between them due to Promotion factor ($p=0.024 < p=0.05$). In terms of other factors, statistically meaningful differences are not observed. If we extend significance level to 0.10 then statistically meaningful differences has occurred in terms of Price factor ($p=0.83$), too.

Employment & Factors

We applied One-way Anova test to analyse whether meaningful differences between employed and unemployed students' opinions about factor importance on development of tourism sector in Albania. (The full –time observation is only in one case, so we combined it with Part-time group as employed. So we have two groups: Employed and Unemployed).

Hypothesis:

H3: Mean factor ratings are same between employment status.

In terms of ANOVA results any meaningful differences are seen between employed and unemployed students due to all factors at significance level 0.05. But if we extend significance level to 0.10 then in two factors (Diversity of Tourism, p value=0.89 and Price, p value=0.74) statistically meaningful differences occurred between employed and unemployed students.

Results and Discussion

The research highlights the important factors in Albanian tourism sector. In order to highlight these some further points will be brought up to light.

The sexual origin of the students is coincided with the gender origin of students' population in Albanian universities. So this finding can be assumed the representation of all students in Albanian universities. It is important to note that

female population is greater than male population in Albania as states 'there were 98 males for every 100 females in the country'.³¹²

When the study looks at the job, the finding is one student has full-time job, 13 students have part-time job, and other 67 students have no job. This finding has correspondent with the country's labour forces and employment data. For example, one source states that 'in 2004 (2012 statistics has not got great difference), Albania's unemployment rate was officially put at 14.4%, however the actual unemployment rate may be in excess of 30%'.³¹³ It can be assumed that it is quite normal to see more students who do not have a job and categorised as unemployed during their studentship period.

When we examine tourism share of Albania from World Tourism Pie; it is seen that 14, 8 % of students say Albania has more than it deserved in contrast, 66.7 % of students, majority of them, expressed that Albania has less than it deserved and 18, 5% of them express that Albania has just it deserved.

According to World Travel & Tourism Council 'the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP in 2011 was ALL 81.4bn (6.2% of GDP). This is forecast to rise by 5.6% to ALL 85.9bn in 2012'.³¹⁴ This seems that there is a growing tendency in travel and tourism industry in Albania. Consequently, the finding and literature about this analysis have some common ground in a way that there is a potential which needs to be developed. This can be understood easier if once compare with the country ranking. There are more than 180 countries in the world and Albania secures 48 places in this industry which is quite good.³¹⁵

6 factors were asked to university students to evaluate their importance in terms of development of tourism sector in Albania. The students mentioned that infrastructure is the most important factor that affects development of tourism. Then transportation, service quality price, diversity of tourism and promotion followed respectively.

These findings are important in order to understand the current condition of Albania in terms of tourism. It is clear that infrastructure of Albania in general needs more attention than other areas of investment. It is stated one of the report which was submitted to a government department that 'tourism growth will be driven and supported by conscientious marketing, creative design of products, appropriate

312 Encyclopedia.com, (2007) 'Worldmark Encyclopaedia of Nations: Albania', in <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Albania.aspx> [accessed on 3 October 2012]

313 Encyclopedia.com, (2007) 'Worldmark Encyclopaedia of Nations: Albania', in <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Albania.aspx> [accessed on 3 October 2012]

314 World Travel & Tourism Council (2012), Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact 2012, Albania, it is also available from: http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/albania2012.pdf [accessed on 3 October 2012], p.3

315 World Travel & Tourism Council (2012), Travel & Tourism: Economic Impact 2012, Albania, it is also available from: http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/albania2012.pdf [accessed on 3 October 2012], p.9

infrastructure, high quality human resources, and a tourism “business climate” with clear rules of the game and appropriate structures to ensure its long-term economic viability’.³¹⁶

Conclusions and Further Research Opportunities

This paper tested its hypothesis namely H1: Mean factor ratings are same between male and female; H2: Mean factor ratings are same between students’ universities; and H3: Mean factor ratings are same between employment statuses. The results of these tests have been stated at the above.

This paper shows that it is quite important to see the future of Albania, concerning tourism sector. Their perceptions and approaches to sector are not only important, but also promising. There is a potential in Albanian tourism sectors which need to be improved, especially in building, road, airport, and other main groundwork.

This research suggests that there is need further study on this topic the proposed study should include people who are working in tourism sector. Those people’s opinions are important to understand which investment is more important than the other. The reason is that, Albania has limited resources that could go to into the tourism sector and that should be invested in the right areas.

Finally, this study opens an academic discussion on Albanian tourism sector that need to improve and become one of main income generation sector in Albanian economy.

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