

ALBANIAN TOURISM MANAGEMENT - THE FUTURE PATH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Managementul turistic albanez – următoarea etapă în dezvoltarea durabilă)

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Rezumat

Albania este considerată destinație turistică pe coasta Mediteranei și are o poziție competitivă pe piața internațională de turism. Susținerea și conștientizarea problemelor de mediu reprezintă o parte majoră în strategia de dezvoltare turistică a Albaniei.

Sunt multe motive care justifică această strategie și care ne arată calea spre o dezvoltare durabilă a managementului.

În Albania, eforturile depuse pentru a face din turism o opțiune de o mai mare durată au fost concentrate din ce în ce mai mult asupra unei abordări de dezvoltare a comunităților, dar o analiză a diferențelor dintre dezvoltarea economică a comunităților tradiționale și dezvoltarea turismului din comunitățile respective în cazul țării noastre, demonstrează că turismul continuă să fie condus de guvern și nu de interesele comunităților.

Cuvinte cheie

- Management turistic;
- Dezvoltare durabilă;
- Turismul albanez;
- Piața turistică.

Abstract

Albania is recognized as a tourism destination at the Mediterranean coast and has a competitive position in the international tourism market. Sustainability and awareness for environmental issues are major part of the tourism development strategy in Albania.

There are a lot of reasons explaining this strategy and how the management must be driven in the way of sustainability.

In Albania, efforts to make tourism a more sustainable option have been focused increasingly on a community development approach, but an analysis of the differences between traditional community economic development and community tourism development in the case of our country, clearly shows that tourism continues to be driven by levels of government rather than community interests.

Keywords

- Tourism management;
- Sustainable development;
- Albanian tourism;
- Tourism market.

The development of Albanian tourism market

For Albania, tourism has been considerate like a great resource, which is very important to concentrate. Nature offers in Albania a lot of diversity like sea, mountain, beach etc. All these factors make Albanian tourism market very preferred. The maintenance of Albanian tourist's product in competitive levels and in the different way of previous levels is one of the most important objectives. This could be realized using:

- Continuous studies of tourist market in Albania;
- Growth of supply level;
- The offer of quality tourist's package for national groups and foreign groups like week-end, cultural and historical package etc.;
- Improvement of quality of accommodation and building new structures in opportunely standards;
- Placement of representative offices in local and national levels.

The development and the dynamic of tourist market

Nowadays there are many forms and models to develop tourist market. These can be condensed in specific policies to manage that important sector of economy. Market's fragmentation is a strategy used for optimization, concentration of resources in a general market and consists from many requests and motives to travel.

The development of tourism in Albania has begun since 1929 with the creation of Royal Motor Tourist Club. In that club the main goal was visiting for business purposing. The tourist offer in that time includes 13 rest areas and 27 hotels. The demand of foreign visitor in that time was in limits 1-1.5% of population number. The major part of tourist was from neighbor countries like Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, etc.

The expansion of tourism after 1997 was not for pleasure but it was grown up journey's activities. The growth of the number of rooms compared with the number of beds signifies that the number of rooms has grown up about 10% and beds 30% (see the table).

Based on the data below, results a extension of the number of hotels, specially in the private sector. The demand is concentrated in activities regarding business. Favorably geographical position, attractive beaches, lakes and mountains are typical for Albania. Primary destinations for tourists were Durres, Vlore, Shengjin, Pogradec and Shkodra, and for business tourists were Durres, Tirane, Vlore, Korce and Shkodra.

Fragmentation of Albanian tourist's market during the last years shows deployment in journeys for business purposes. This fragment presents a special importance because business journeys are shorts but expenditure is noticeably.

The identification of main fragments in tourist markets is an important stage that helps to determine future development strategic plans. The fragments in Albanian tourists market are:

- Rest Tourism include tourist product offered at coast, lakes and mountains. The priority here is Sun & Beach;
- Cultural Tourism which include product and tourist's activities in the cities and historical centers, museums etc;
- Business Tourism which include all developed commercial centers and cities;

- Health Tourism, which include the offers in curative areas and mountain;
- Sport Tourism which includes all the activities offered at coast;
- Pilgrimage Tourism includes the product that is offered in cult centers.

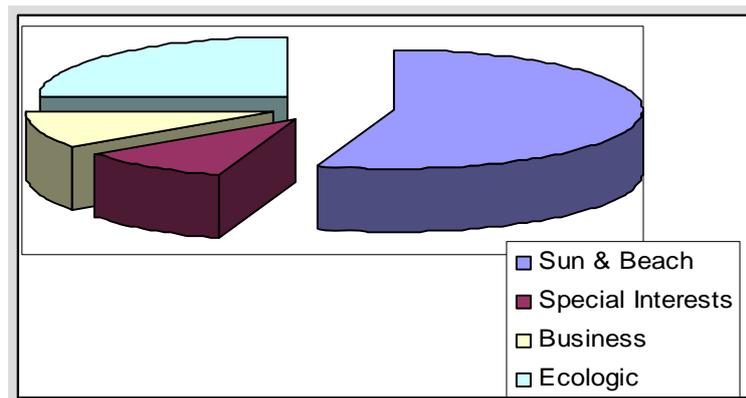
Table 1. Arrivals of foreign tourists in Albania during 1970-2002

Year	Total of foreigners	Number of nights	Average of stand	Daily tourists
1970	280	3,660	12.9	-
1980	6,065	85,263	14.1	-
1990	1,203	5,719	4.8	-
1991	3,531	19,985	7.9	-
1992	3,748	39,491	10.5	-
1993	29,997	83,824	2.8	-
1994	12,892	21,536	1.7	17,000
1995	38,939	77,241	1.6	14,500
1996	37,142	131,763	2.9	12,000
1997	34,838	66,784	2.5	6,100
1998	47,275	88,615	2.2	30,984
1999	56,276	143,854	2.6	50,000
2000	118,975	66,120	3.00	-
2001	183,606	72,963	3.00	-
2002	371,251	95,641	3.00	-

Source: Tourism Ministry

In the future for Tirana, as a capital city of Albania, the business tourism will be a priority. Domestic tourists concentrated at Adriatic and Jon sea, and Ohrid lake. The purpose of Albanian tourists from abroad was visits at friends, family and sun & beach.

To obtain the objectives for a quality tourist market we have to deploy the international tourist market that will require concentration in pilot areas with the best tourist potential. In the future, the delivery of main tourist fragments will be:



Referring to the nature of our country, the strategic sector of our tourism is “Sun & Sand”, while cultural & historical tourism should fulfill and support voyager’s activities and the tourists inside. The analysis of fragmentation shows the possibility of using air transportation. These results are important for traveling agencies and hospitality industry. The journey for business purposes is very usual nowadays.

All the foreign tourists in Albania have been surprised by Albanian hospitality. That means that it will exist a better commitment from public and private sector to promote our natural, cultural and human potential.

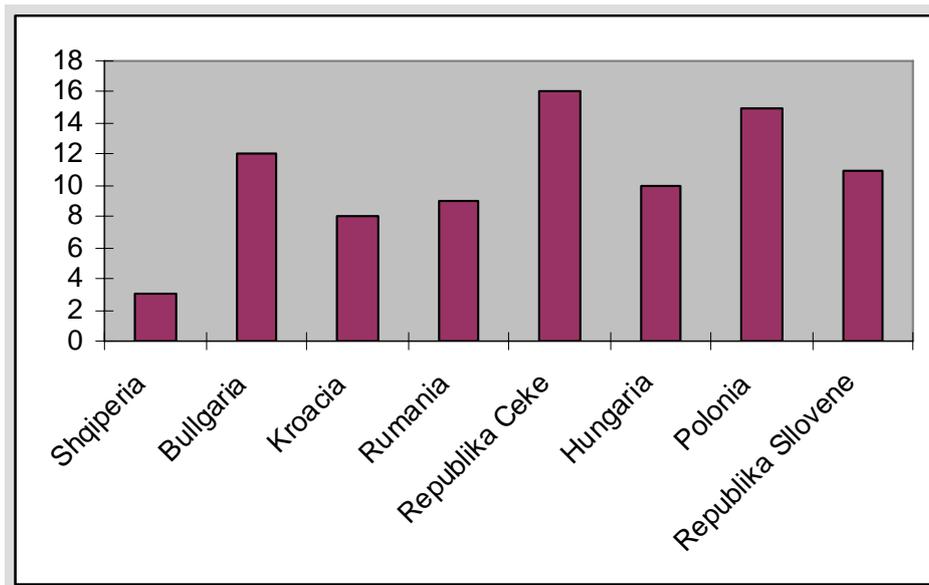
And from Balkan’s tourism viepont?

Albania is at the first steps of European standards. Development of tourism and keeping the relations with the Balkan in the same time are difficult duties, which will ask for support. These criteri include:

- Infrastructure;
- Implementation of community in progress programs and ways;
- The full legal package for tourism development.

Albanian Tourist Market – Integral Part of Balkan Market

Many tourist operators operate in tourist destinations in Balkan and East Europe. Below we will find the delivery and comparison of these tourist operators.



Development of tourism in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989-1990 has caused the actual situation of tourism there. That industry development was characterized by:

- Dependence from the state and bilateral agreement;
- Low standards level and absence of investors;
- Hungarian and Poland were better prepared to attract tourists;
- Bulgarian and Romania lost their clients.

The reports of Balkan’s fundamental destinations in reference to touristic potentials

From the viewpoint about potentials and the development of tourism in the future, Croatia is considered like tourist destination that possesses the highest potential. Then Mont Black and Macedonia are seen like tourist destinations that possess a fixed potential with good perspectives.

Apart Albanian Tours GmbH (Dortmund) all the tour operators have made Albania like a destination without or with little potentials for tourist development.

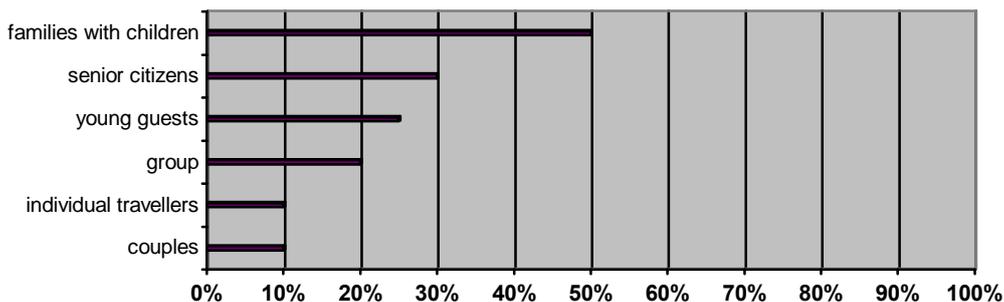
Croatia is considered the only tourist destination that offers high quality tourist potentials. According to tour operators, Bulgaria and Monte Negro can consolidate their position with a medium quality tourist product. While other destinations, including Albania, are seen like low budgets destinations, with some chances about tourist products chosen and with medium quality.

The fundamental destination ’s problems in Balkan

Referring to the destinations above-mentioned, considered important for development of tourism in Balkan, we conclude that their main problems with a view to the development of tourism, which are shown in the in following picture, are as follows:

- Low quality of tourist services;
- Lack of a complete juristic product;
- Lack of Marketing activities;
- Lack of the necessary hotel capacities;
- Unclearness of political situations in many Balkan region;
- Lack of referation to local partners;
- Lack of competence on specific direction of touristic development.

According to tour operators, tourist destinations in Balkan don’t possess sufficient and suitable hotel capacity.



The main groups who travel in Balkan are made of families with children 30%, young people 13%, groups 15%, individuals 8%, citizens 19%, couples 10%. This phenomenon is reflected on the previous picture, especially emphasizing the growing tendency of families preferring Balkan as their destination.

Sustainable development in Albania

Albania faces regional competition in tourism from, countries like Greece, Croatia, Turkey and Montenegro all of which have much more advanced infrastructure development for tourism and similar natural beauty to Albania. Therefore tourism is unlikely to be an important source of growth over the short run and medium run. Another interesting finding during this year is that the number of Albanian tourists going abroad has increased. In my opinion the key problem is the lack of infrastructure, both in physic and human capital. The role of government should be to improve this infrastructure not through the level of public expenditure but also working closely with the private sector in improving the quality of service. This will be important for the longer term development of tourism.

Two of the main factors behind the economic growth over transition period have been the high inflow of expatriate remittances and the growth in tourism income. What to my mind the authors do not bring out sufficiently is whether these factors will remain important to foster economic growth in the future. I conclude with a brief analysis of why the current tourism situation is unlikely to guarantee a sustainable economic growth and what policies are needed to maintain the other key drivers of growth as are high level of expatriate remittances.

Maintaining the high inflow of expatriate remittances as a main factor for economic growth is expected to be a problem in the future. It is clear that this factor has been playing an important role for economic development in Albania, and nobody wants it to lose this role. The behaviour of different generations within expatriate families tells us that with other things unchanged, the level of expatriate remittances will decline in the future. All other things equal, this conclusion means that the economic development will suffer. Hence, what can we do to maintain this level high?

As emigrants are creating their own family in their host countries the level of remittances will decline. There are two possibilities to offset this negative impact, one to promote emigrants to come back in Albania and to benefit from their financial, human and social capital or the second, actively promoting the continued exportation of human capital. My suggestion is that we have to promote the second one and the first one will be a result. Reducing youth unemployment through emigration will reduce social problems in short run and as some of these individuals return with improved human and social capital will help economic development in the long run. It is important to remember that the export of human capital, the same with other goods, is faced with competition in world market. Thus, the first step should be to create an appropriate education policy in Albania to optimise the use of emigration for Albania's economic and social development. This conclusion brings out again the importance of education.

Also, it is important to know the weakness and strength of our education system and after that to formulate the necessary policies. It may be more beneficial to focus on pre-university education, or in professional education, for example learning the foreign languages or specialised on tourism services. It does it mean that the government has to

increase the amount of money towards the education sector, but it requires the development of an education strategy with clear objectives. The education system in these years has been treated with priority, but more work has to be done.

Finally, I note that Albania is 'on course' in relation to integration but it would be interesting to have analysed its implication on economic development. Of course, the integration process is seen with much interest from Albania but in the meantime it poses major challenges. The main challenge will be the creation of competitiveness in integration market.

Recommendation on the models regarding sustainable development

In which is sustained creation and the maintenance of stable rapports with the others in Balkan. The main principles are related with these factors:

- Sustainable development. The heredity of our nature permit emplacement of standards, values and responsibilities regarding constant development of tourism and in the same time responsible for environment;
- Seasonal Delivery. That must be one of the most important objectives of marketing activities. The purpose is to optimize hospitality capacities during all annual time;
 - In actual conditions, the local authorities should consider prior that sector;
 - Concentration on chosen area like areas with high potential for the development of the tourism;
 - Using in effectual ways all the resourses.

Keeping of stable rapports in development of tourism market should be considerate, because one of the objectives of tourism is that Albania in the future must be known not like in 1997, but like a tourist destination using a competitive position in the European market. In order to realize such objective is necessary concentration in some pilot area which should possess high tourist potential.

Which are the impacts? Concentration in these areas facilitates the selection of future strategies and the procurement of investor's process. The growth of tourism will be concentrated in specific types of travelers or tourist's package like: sun & sea travel, travel with cultural, sportive, ecologic motives etc. Keeping of stable rapports with Balkan tourism will realize quickly the goal of Albanian tourism, to bring the highest income in national economy.

Recomandation on the quality of services

Tourism has become an integral and increasingly important part of the economies of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, generating employment, revenue and new businesses. The transition from state to private management, from centralization and monopoly to decentralization and competition, has been as painful and costly as it was necessary.

The dynamic nature of tourism industry demands improvement of service quality among all internal and external stakeholders. All organizations in the industry would understand the importance and they know their employees. Service quality has been increasingly identified as a key factor in differentiating service products and building a

competitive advantage in tourism. The process by which customers evaluate a purchase, thereby determining satisfaction and likelihood of repurchase, is important to all marketers but especially to services marketers because, Albania is an unexplored very interesting and beautiful country with great potential in developing different types of tourism. Therefore, high quality is demanded from tourism and hospitality services.

Delivery of quality service in tourism requires cooperation from employees, management and customers. To achieve high-quality services in tourism and hospitality industry is to:

- Understand tourists' expectations;
- Set quality specifications based on tourists' expectations;
- Verify that delivery of the service conforms to quality specifications;
- Not promise more than can be deliver and therefore create very high expectations;
- Constantly monitor tourists perceived services to verify that they are not lower than their expectations.

A better cooperation between the tourism industry and the universities is necessary in order to let them know what we offer, and for us to know better what the industry really needs. This would firstly help in developing better curricula and syllabus, in a better marketing of the knowledge's of our graduates, and secondly, in the quality of the service of this industry. In line with that our research could be more valuable to the local and national development of tourism.

Conclusions and recommendations

In Albania, efforts to make tourism a more sustainable option have been focused increasingly on a community development approach, but an analysis of the differences between traditional community economic development and community tourism development in the case of our country, clearly shows that tourism continues to be driven by levels of government rather than community interests.

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