

BARRIERS AND SUCCESS FACTORS TO ALBANIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Tourism literature notes that tourism places are dynamic and their successful development is strongly influenced by a complex interplay of factors. Little research has been done to identify the key factors that underpin the development of Albanian tourism areas. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Albanian tourism development and the factors that influence its development over time is lacking. The aim of the paper is to identify who are the key factors of success that should be deployed mostly in the development of Albanian tourism. This study stresses some of the biggest problems perceived by the Albanian tourism businesses that hinder the development of tourism. These problems include: Tourism has not been considered in the planning process, lack of awareness about the benefits of tourism development, lack of local community involvement in tourism planning process, lack of expertise in tourism marketing programs, high costs, etc. Also, based on the answers given by respondents "Availability of skilled workers, local support for tourism and local participation in tourism development, the planning-management of tourism, the existence of abundant tourist attractions" are considered the most important for the development of Albanian tourism. In order to be successful, must be strong and important connections between destination development and local communities of businesses and individuals.

Keywords: Tourism Development, Tourism Businesses, Key Factors to Success, Barriers, Destination

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant sector with great contribution to the revitalization of the Albanian economy, a major source of foreign earnings, and a powerful instrument of national and regional development. Tourism is the largest contributor to the balance of payments and the GNP (gross national product), it affects economic growth and the overall level of employment. Albania due to its nature and favorable geographical position owns abundant resources, which enable the application of all types of tourism. Also, Albania is a country with rich cultural heritage. But what is observed more in these long 25 years of transition is a “chaotic tourism development” based on spontaneity, not on long-term plans.

The biggest challenge for all Albanian actors involved as a party in the tourism sector is to take advantage of these potentials and succeed by thinking and doing new things or old things in new ways. The biggest problems perceived by the Albanian tourism businesses in the study that hinder the development of tourism are as follows:

- Actually tourism has not been considered in the planning process.
- Lack of expertise in tourism marketing programs.
- Lack of awareness about the benefits of tourism development
- Lack of local community involvement in tourism planning process.
- High costs

To boost Albanian tourism, the development should be done through strategies of cooperation and competition. In order to be successful, should be strong and important connections between destination development and local communities of businesses and individuals. Also destinations should be capable to maximize the opportunities, exploit chances, also minimize the threats or pressure of the intensified competition.

Research Question

Which factors are rated as important to Albanian tourism development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors Underpinning Tourism Development

Tourism literature notes that that tourism places are dynamic and their development is strongly influenced by a complex interplay of factors. The figure below presents a summary of what various authors have expressed in relation to tourism development. Various authors over the decades have developed different models on the development of tourism such as: Models focusing on physical and spatial factors; Models focusing on planning and management; Models

emphasizing local control & Models emphasizing the role of local entrepreneurs. These authors with their ideas have given great contribution to the development of tourism industry.

So, Christaller (1963) notes the idea that tourist areas evolve through a continuous process of development where the landscape acts as a trigger for the initial development of tourism.

Miossec (1976) stresses the spatial dynamics of tourism development through a consideration of such elements: transportation; tourist behavior, and the attitudes of tourist operators in the local community.

Butler (1980) looks at the evolution and potential decline of tourism areas overtime. Different tourism areas become not attractive after a certain period of time. Is this the destiny of Albania in the near future? Butler stresses that the potential tourists at the beginning are attracted by natural beauties, cultural-historical heritage of the area, it is needed a good management of them during the time. The model emphasizes the issue of unsustainable growth and the need for planning and management at a destination.

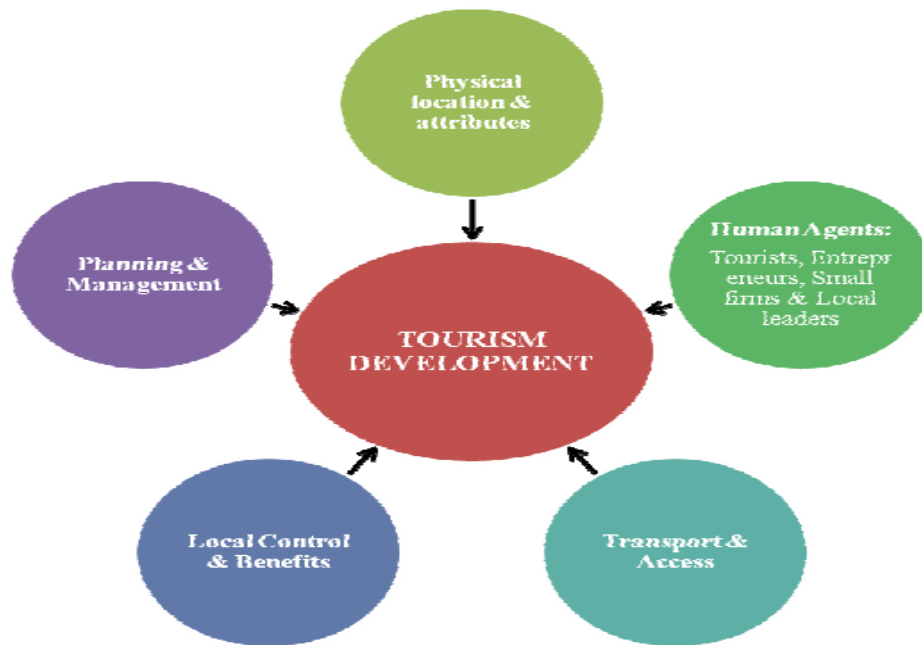
Gormsen (1981) identifies the tendency for tourism to develop in peripheral locations, away from urban settings.

Lundgren (1982) notes that the influence of location factors, transport and tourist agents on tourism development. Lundgren recognizes that a tourism area's appeal is largely influenced by its relationship with location. Lundgren emphasizes the importance of accessibility and transportation.

Ritchie and Crouch's (2003) highlight a number of key factors that influence tourism development which are grouped in five broad areas including: supporting factors and resources, core resources and attractors, destination management, destination policy, planning and development and qualifying and amplifying determinants. According to Ritchie & Crouch (2003), tourism enterprises are fundamental importance to the development of tourism as an industry. Also tourism development is a complex phenomena influenced by factors operating at both global and local levels.

In order to be successful should be exploited what is highlighted in these models. There must be strong and important connections between destination development and local communities of businesses and individuals. Also Albania as a destination should be capable to maximize the opportunities, exploit chances, and also minimize the threats or pressure of the intensified competition.

Figure 1: Summary of Factors that Influence Tourism Development



As cited by 'Albania Tourism Today "the main challenges on realization of strategic goals of Albanian tourism development are: Establishing a developmental spatial plan for Albanian tourism; Education of all management and other staff in tourism; Continuous protection, implementation and respect of high ecological standards , long term sustainable assessment of tourist potentials; Construction of transport infrastructure and the optimal organization of transportation to service tourism; Development of an integral and integrated offer in a tourist destination; Increasing the level of quality of all accommodations facilities and adapting categorization criteria to international quality standards; Ongoing entrance of recognized international hotel "brands " on the Albanian market; A more effective distribution and use of modern trends in communication and marketing

So tourism businesses need to be continually monitoring, reviewing and evaluating tourism performance and management strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of tourism in the destination. The strategic planning and ongoing management for a destination will contribute to the continuous improvement and success of a tourism destination.

METHODOLOGY

The intended target of this paper is Albanian tourism businesses. It's important to know their opinions about the factors that hinder the Albanian tourism development and the key factors of success that should be deployed mostly. A structured questionnaire was used for this study,

with questions mostly formulated with responses with 4 level Likert Scale, to eliminate the neutral answer (1=very important, 2=important, 3=not very important,4= not at all important). The sample was randomly selected among businesses of the region of Vlora, during July 2014. A cover letter sent with the questionnaire, promised all participants strict anonymity and that the responses would be treated in aggregate form, was a reason to encourage firms to give real evaluations. Results were elaborated with SPSS 21 package program.

A total of 110 questionnaires were distributed to the businesses, by e-mail, but only 77 from them returned the questionnaire completed, with a 70 % response rate. A limitation may be considered the response rate, which could have been at higher percentage, but due to time restrictions we used only the questionnaires returned during the period specified above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

As can be seen from table 1, the majority of Albanian tourism enterprises involved in the study are small businesses (92,2%), only 7,8 % of them are medium ones. Almost 48,1 % of the respondents had been running their business for 6-10 years, 37,7 % for less than 5 years and only 14,3 % had an activity for more than 10 years.

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Sample Responses by Characteristics of the Business

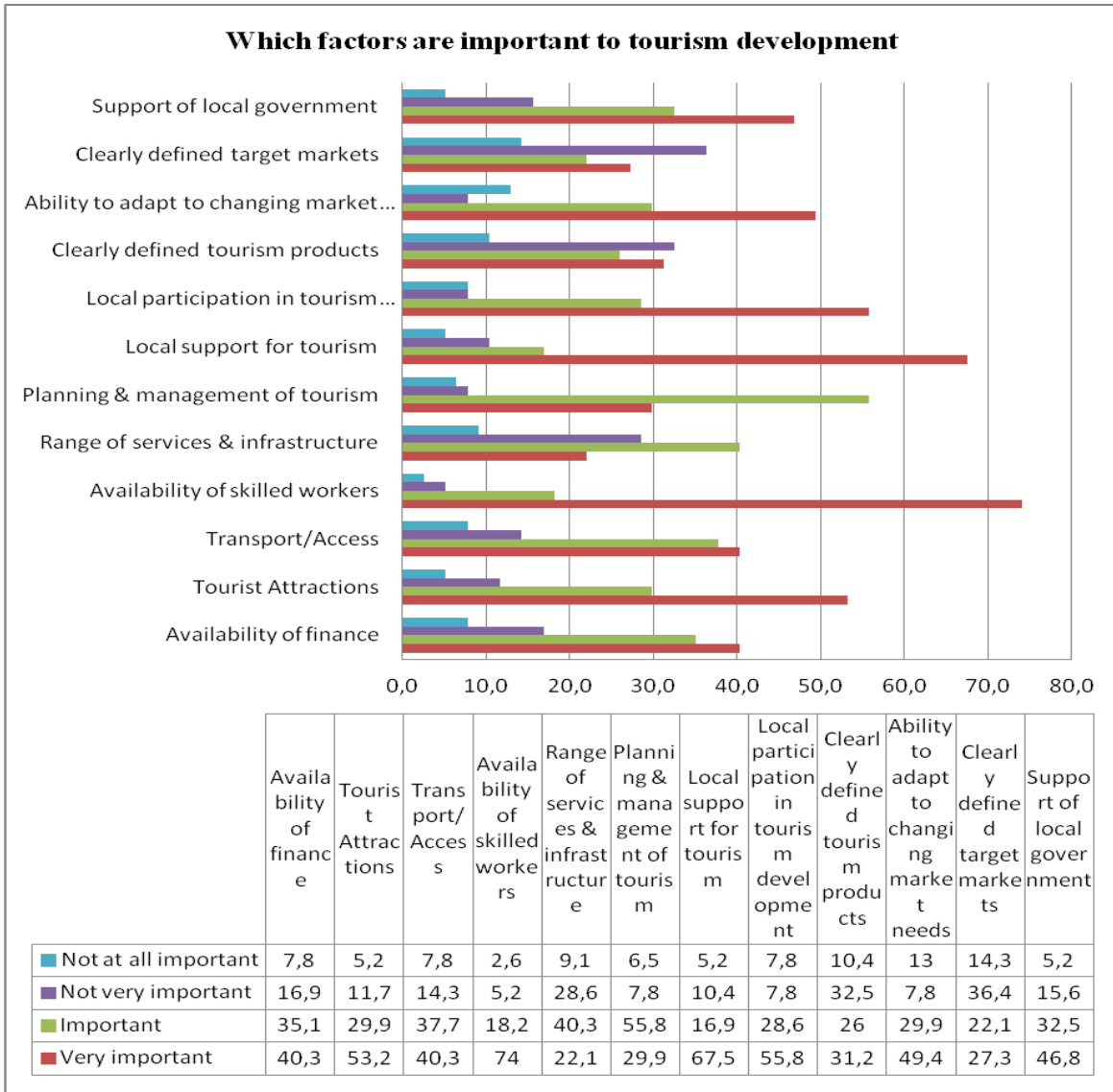
Small, Medium or large business		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Small business	71	92,2	92,2	92,2
	Medium business	6	7,8	7,8	100,0
	Total	77	100,0	100,0	
Years of operation in this business		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 years	29	37,7	37,7	37,7
	6-10 years	37	48,1	48,1	85,7
	More than 10 years	11	14,3	14,3	100,0
	Total	77	100,0	100,0	

Descriptive Findings

The aim of the paper is to identify who are the key factors of success that should be deployed mostly in the development of Albanian tourism. Based on the answers given by respondents results are shown in the following diagram. So “Availability of skilled workers” with 74 % is considered the most important factor, followed by local support for tourism (67,5%) and local participation in tourism development (55,8%). Even “the planning - management of tourism” and

“existence of abundant tourist attractions” are considered as factors of great importance. Respondents consider all the factors important in the development of tourism, so they all should taken into consideration and should not be overlooked or ignored.

Figure 2: Factors Important to Tourism Development



CONCLUSIONS

The biggest problems perceived by the Albanian tourism businesses in the study that hinder the development of tourism are as follows:

- Actually tourism has not been considered in the planning process.
- Lack of expertise in tourism marketing programs.
- Lack of awareness about the benefits of tourism development

- Lack of local community involvement in tourism planning process.
- High costs

To be competitive, a destination must have a sense of itself; it should have a purpose and be managed in a way that promotes the pursuit of that purpose. The emphasis should be on topics like: education of all management and other staff in tourism, construction of transport infrastructure, development of an integral and integrated offer in a tourist destination, long-term sustainable assessment of tourist potentials, increasing the level of quality of all accommodation facilities, etc.

In order to be successful, should be strong and important connections between destination development and local communities of businesses and individuals. Also destinations should be capable to maximize the opportunities, exploit chances, and also minimize the threats or pressure of the intensified competition.

Also the development should be based in sustainability; coordination between all the parties, a more effective management, marketing relied mostly on promotion of tourism, more investments by the central-local governance, a higher quality of services provided, storage and non degradation of the environment. These ones will form the basis of developing a sustainable tourism with growth potential. To boost Albanian tourism, the development should be done through strategies of cooperation and competition. Therefore, changing the ways of doing things could be considered as the only choice to become successful.

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