

# The Relevance Of Different Aspects Of Sustainability For The Albanian Tourism Hotels

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## Abstract

This study is focused on albanian tourism hotels and their orientation towards sustainability. Personal interests of accommodation units owners have made the current development of tourism chaotic and unsustainable. A hotel sustainability business model that was introduced first in Slovenia will be used to investigate the relevance that albanian tourism hotels put to the sustainability dimensions. The aim is to highlight which of three aspects is neglected and takes less attention than others. How important are the different aspects of sustainability (indicators) for albanian hotel owners and managers? Did they measure and monitor these indicators. The main findings stresses that they do not pay the same attention and importance to all aspects of sustainability.

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**Keywords:** Albanian tourism hotels, sustainability, HSBM model, economic dimension, environmental dimension, social dimension

## Introduction

As we all know the albanian tourism hotels are mostly small businesses, fragmented, oriented towards short-term profits. Personal interests of accommodation units owners have made the current development of tourism chaotic and unsustainable. Also numerous environmental problems in most of the time are considered less important compared to financial aspects for the owners /managers of accommodation units in Albania. While the social aspect has been totally neglected. Since this situation does not lead anywhere more and more emphasis is putting towards a consistent approach. A consistent approach enables the company to be more competitive, more resistant to shocks, more united in purpose.

Applying the term sustainability to the hotel industry entails “meeting the current desires of the guests, employees, and local communities without sacrificing the desires of future generations” (Sheehan, 2007). So, in order for a hotel to be truly sustainable, it must not only be environmentally conscious but it must also demonstrate a commitment to the local community. In general, businesses vary in their approach to sustainability depending on the phase in which their business is; interests that executives have toward the concept; the resources available, etc. The main aim of this study is the investigation about the relevance of different aspects of sustainability for the albanian tourism hotels. We will study whether environmental and social aspects are neglected and which of them gets little attention. Accordingly research questions that arise are:

- *How important are the different aspects of sustainability for owners and managers of albanian accommodation units?*
- *Did they measure and monitor these indicators?*

A similar study was done in advance in Slovenia (Mihalic et al , 2012) where we based our study.

### Methodology

The intended target of this paper are albanian tourism hotels. It’s important to know their opinions about the sustainability of tourism sector. To calculate the sample size of the study population representative we need: the probability to find a business that operates in "activities accommodation and food services" similar to the business that we want to ask. Population in our study are all accommodation units, distributed in the entire country from north to south. From the available data, the probability that we have to find albanian accommodation units is :

$$p=18061/112,537=0.16049$$

Calculation of the sample size was done through the following formula:

Where :

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{m^2} \cdot Deff$$

n = the sample size

z = standard deviation  $\alpha = 0.05$  (1.96)

p = probability to find a sample business with desired characteristics

m = error margin of data obtained

deff = sampling effect

Table 1 : Calculation of the sample size

Targeted group	probability p	1-p	standard deviation $\alpha=0.05$ (1.96)	error margin of data obtained	sampling effect deff	Required sample
Total population	0.16	0.84	1.96	0.05	1	202

After initial calculations, the sample size is 202 businesses (accommodation units). A structured questionnaire was used for this study, with questions mostly formulated with responses with 5 level Likert Scale, (1= 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). Results were elaborated with SPSS 21 package program.

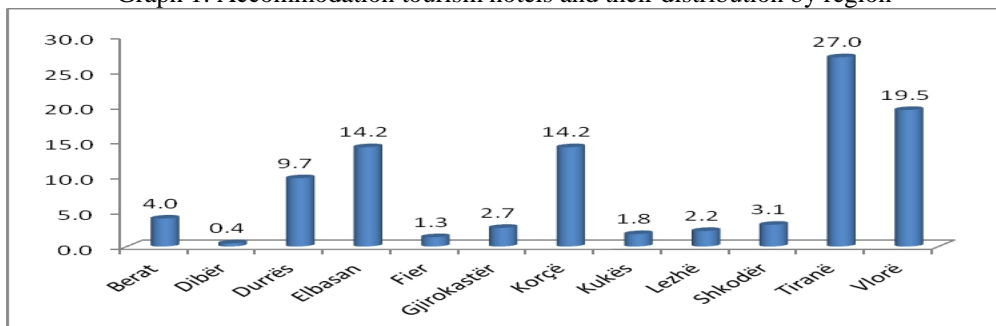
## Results analysis

### *The accommodation unit profile*<sup>46</sup>

This section presents information about the main characteristics of the albanian tourism hotels. These data include grouping them by region, years of operation, number of rooms, number of employees. In the final analysis were included 226 accommodation units, whose answers were considered valid.

- Accommodation tourism businesses and their distribution by region  
 Most of the accommodation units that have expressed their willingness to become part of this study are located in the district of Tirana (27%), followed later by the Vlora region (19.5%). Albanian accommodation units in the region of Gjirokastra, Fier, Lezha, Kukës and Dibra occupy a very small portion.

Graph 1: Accommodation tourism hotels and their distribution by region

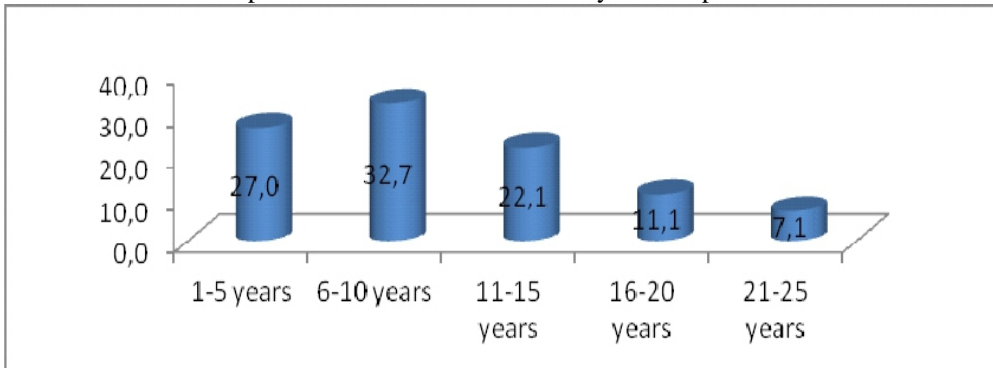


Source: Survey results

- Accommodation tourism units and years of operation ( in activity)  
 The tourism sector has developed only after the 1990 year when a pluralist era began, therefore the albanian accommodation units do not have a long experience in tourism compared with other countries. Approximately one third of the albanian tourism businesses have 6-10 years experience in tourism; followed by them with 1-5 years (27%). Hotels with greater longevity in the field of tourism (21-25 years) constitute a very small percentage, only (7.1%).

<sup>46</sup> Small businesses : Official definitions differ from each other, in many cases also they differ by the sector. In order to define the size of a business many definitions refer to numerical categories related with the number of employees or the annual turnover.

Graph 2: Accommodation units and years of operation

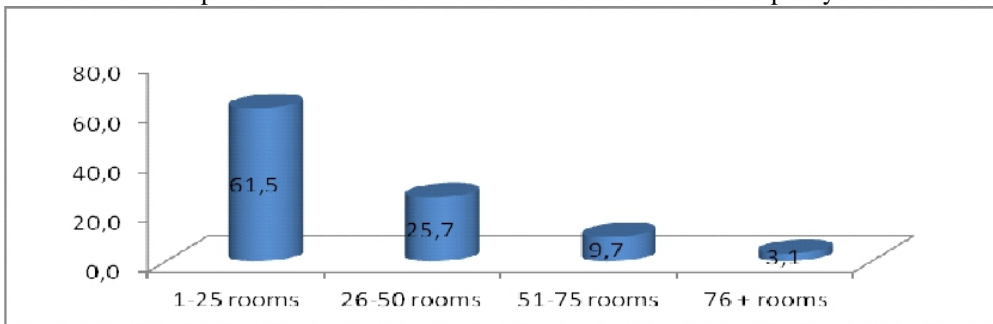


Source: Survey results

- Accommodation tourism businesses and their capacity

In general, accommodation tourism businesses in Albania are classified as small units according to their capacity. Approximately 61.5% of the units surveyed have 1-25 rooms. Those with 26-50 rooms occupy about (25.7%), while larger hotels that have over 76 rooms are in a very low percentage, only (3.1%).

Graph3: Accommodation tourism businesses and their capacity



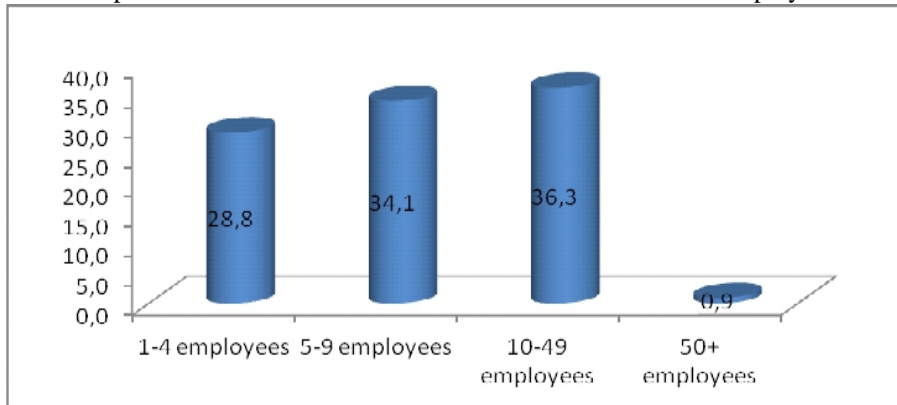
Source: Survey results

- Accommodation tourism businesses and number of employees <sup>47</sup>

Part of the study was providing information about the number of employees they have as staff. The information about the number of employees was requested for the period of peak tourist season considering that in other parts of the year this number is relatively low. We can say that prevail those hotels that have 10-49 employees (36.3%), followed by those with 5-9 employees (34.1%). Hotels that have a very large staff are only (0.9%).

<sup>47</sup> The division into categories is made according to the definition of INSTAT (Institute of Statistics in Albania)

Graph4: Accommodation tourism businesses and number of employees



Source: Survey results

- **Analysis of the HSBM model**

Assuming that the accommodation units do not give the same importance to the sustainability dimensions and that they are not aware about the importance of non-economic aspects of sustainability, to test this assumption we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H1a: There is a difference in how albanian tourism hotels perceive the importance of each of the three dimensions (economic, environmental, social)*

*H1b: There is a difference in how albanian tourism hotels monitor the importance of each of the three dimensions (economic, environmental, social)*

First of all we should say that the marketing dimension has shifted under the economic dimension because profitability and consumer satisfaction should be seen as complementary to each other. A high competitiveness in tourism sector sustainable profitability can be created only by putting emphasize to the importance of intangible resources such as rapid response to customer needs and preferences, innovation, and image quality( Hunt ,1995). For this reason, financial and marketing indicators are incorporated into the set of economic indicators by creating a "total economic dimension".

Table 2: Sustainability dimensions

Paired differences for indicators	Importance			Measure	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed t-test)	% of companies	Sig. (chi-square difference test)
<b>Pair 1</b>					
Economic dimension	3.43	0.66	0.003	66	0.000
Social-culturor dimension	3.33	0.89		34	
<b>Pair 2</b>					
Economic dimension	3.43	0.66	0.041	66	0.000
Environmental dimension	3.27	0.91		49	
<b>Pair 3</b>					
Environmental dimension	3.27	0.66	0.14	49	0.000
Social-culturor dimension	3.33	0.89		34	

Source: Survey results

The data of table 2 generated by SPSS programme shows that the accommodation units in Albania do not perceive equally important the 3 dimensions. This is proven by statistical test Sig. (2-tailed t-test) which is different for all of them. Total economic dimension is perceived as the dimension which is statistically more significant, as we can see in both cases the economic dimension Sig. (2-tailed t-test) is 0.003 and 0.041, less than 5%. Social-cultural dimension was perceived by firms as less important than two others. This is confirmed by Sig. (2-tailed t-test), namely 0.014. Regarding monitoring, the economic dimension is ranked first being monitored by 66% of the accommodation units, then is positioned the environmental dimension with a measurement of 49% and the socio-cultural dimension was ranked the last. Eventually we support the hypothesis that the accommodation units do not give the same importance to the dimensions of sustainability. They also differ to the extent of the monitoring.

- **The importance /monitoring of the economic dimension**

Then our analysis will be focused on the total economic aspect and its sub-dimensions which are financial and marketing. It should be emphasized the growing role of marketing aspect that enables a sustainable profitability with an emphasis on tourist satisfaction, long-term relationships and the quality of service perceived by tourists. In general the tourism industry sector and accommodation units in particular prefer or favor financial services indicators against traditional performance indicators. Therefore, in our study we assume that albanian hotels do not give the same importance to sub-economic dimensions. To test this assumption we formulate the following hypotheses:

**H2a:** *There is a difference in how albanian hotel firms perceive the importance of each of the two economic sub-categories (financial and marketing).*

**H2b:** *There is a difference in how albanian hotel firms monitor each of the two economic sub-categories (financial and marketing).*

Table3: The importance /monitoring of the economic dimension

Paired differences for indicators	Importance			Measure	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed t-test)	% of companies	Sig. (chi-square difference test)
<b>Pair 1</b>					
Financial sub-dimension	3.68	0.82	0.000	89	0.000
Marketing sub-dimension	3.19	0.78		62	

Source: Survey results

The data of table 2 generated by SPSS programme shows that the accommodation units in Albania do not perceive equally the 2 sub-dimensions of the economic aspect. This is proven by statistical test Sig. (2-tailed t-test) which is 0.00. Regarding monitoring, sub-financial dimension is monitored by 89% of the albanian accommodation units; the marketing sub-dimension by only 62% of them. Eventually we support the hypothesis that the accommodation units do not give the same importance to the 2 sub-dimensions of economic aspect. They also differ to the extent of the monitoring.

- **The importance /monitoring of the environmental dimension**

Environmental problems in Albania in most of the time are not considered significant compared to economic issues. Only recently the owners / managers of albanian accommodation units have become aware of the negative impact of their economic activities on the environment, implying Albania's future as a successful tourist destination. It should be recognized urgently the importance that environment represents. Actual analysis has come to the conclusion that the accommodation units in Albania do not perceive equally the 3 aspects of sustainability and environmental aspect is perceived as less important by the accommodation units compared to the economic dimension. Then our analysis will be focused on environmental sub-dimensions which are "biodiversity, resources, environmental education and the importance/monitoring that receives each of them. In our study we assume that hotels do not give the same importance sub-environmental dimensions. To test this assumption we formulate the following hypotheses:

**H3a:** *There is a difference in how albanian hotel firms perceive the importance of each of the three environmental sub-categories (resource use, biodiversity and environmental education).*

**H3b:** *There is a difference in how albanian hotel firms monitor each of the three environmental sub-categories (resource use, biodiversity and environmental education).*

Table 4: The importance /monitoring of the environmental dimension

Paired differences for indicators	Importance			Measure	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed t-test)	% e companies	Sig. (chi-square difference test)
<b>Pair 1</b>					
Bio Diversity	2.90	1.20	0.000	29	0.000
Resources	3.48	0.73		54	
<b>Pair 2</b>					
Bio Diversity	2.90	1.20	0.000	29	0.000
Education	3.21	1.32		31	
<b>Pair 3</b>					
Resources	3.48	0.73	0.000	54	0.000
Education	3.21	1.32		31	

Source: Survey results

The table 4 table shows that the albanian accommodation units perceive the same three sub-environmental dimensions. This is proven by statistical test Sig. (2-tailed t-test) which is the same for the 3 sub-dimensions of this dimension. Regarding monitoring "resources" are monitored from 54% of the albanian accommodation units, 31% of them monitor environmental education and biodiversity was monitored only by 29% of them. Eventually we support the hypothesis that the accommodation units give the same importance to the three sub-environmental dimensions. They vary in terms of the monitoring.

- **The importance /monitoring of the social dimension**

Actual analysis has come to the conclusion that the accommodation units in Albania that the social dimension is the aspect which is monitored less by the albanian accommodation units. Following our analysis will be focused in its sub-dimensions which are: human capital, cultural capital, the power of participation. In our study we assume that hotels do not give the same importance to the sub dimensions of socio-cultural aspect. To test this assumption we formulate the following hypotheses:

**H4a:** *There is a difference in how albanian hotel firms perceive the importance of each of the three social sub-categories (human capital, cultural capital, power to change and participation).*



**H4b:** *There is a difference in how albanian hotel firms monitor each of the three social sub-categories (human capital, cultural capital, power to change and participation).*

Table 5: The importance /monitoring of the social dimension

Paired differences for indicators	Importance			Measure	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed t-test)	% of companies	Sig. (chi-square difference test)
<b>Pair 1</b>					
Cultural Capital	2.73	0.88	0.000	45	0.000
Human Capital	4.03	1.05		68	
<b>Pair 2</b>					
Cultural Capital	2.73	0.88	0.000	45	0.000
Power Participation	3.48	0.73		48	
<b>Pair 3</b>					
Human capital	4.03	1.05	0.000	68	0.000
Power Participation	3.48	0.73		48	

Source: Survey results

Table 5 reveal that the albanian accommodation units perceive as same the 3 sub-dimensions of socio-cultural aspect. This is proven by statistical test Sig. (2-tailed t-test) which is equal to 3 sub-dimensions. Regarding monitoring human capital is monitored 68% of the albanian accommodation units, power level to participation by 48% of them, while cultural capital is monitored by only 45% .

## Conclusion

We all accept that tourism has multiple effects and these effects can be positive or negative depending on how tourism is developed and managed. We all accept that sustainable tourism means the best way towards a secure future. The main aim of this study was the investigation about the relevance of different aspects of sustainability for the albanian accommodation units

The findings highlight that: although sustainability is considered now as a very important concept for the albanian accommodations units owners / managers, they do not pay the same attention and importance to all aspects of sustainability. Final results show that although the owners/managers of accommodation units in Albania are aware of the importance of the goals related to the performance and environmental benefits under the huge pressure to achieve higher financial results in short-term periods, they give high priority only to economic goals. These results are very similar to other studies (Mihalic, 2009; Bohdanovic and Martinac, 2003; Bramwell and

Allertorp, 2001). The albanian tourism industry has an obligation to tourism sustainability. Accomodations units with their operations have caused numerous consequences. So the industry has an obligation to minimize the multiple effects .All the businesses operating in the tourism industry have a responsibility to ensure that the industry remains viable for future generations.

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