

SEA TOURISM IN ALBANIA

Adem YULU

*Istanbul University Department of Geography, Istanbul, Turkey
adem.yulu@istanbul.edu.tr*

Abstract

The Albania, by its geographical position, favorable climatic conditions and by the undiscovered natural beauty and rich historical background has a significant potential for tourism. The development of tourism in Albania was commenced in 1929, and started by the "Royal Motor Tourist Club". The basic purpose of this organization was the "Visits for Business Purposes". Most of the participants were coming from the neighboring countries. However, due to the management of the Albania's communist government that had dominated the country for many years and the closure of the country had affected adversely on the visitings to the country. However, since the early 1990's and due to changing management and the administration's approach to the outer World had began to open the country to the outside. Thus, each passing year, the interest on the Albania's tourism destinations continued to grow. Today, the tourism activities in the Albania is steadily developing and gaining varieties.

The Albania has a total length of 420 km of coastlines, as on the Adriatic in the west and on the Ionian Sea at the southwest and to be lived long and hot summer seasons and with the depending on the existence of rich geographical sources, the tourism activities in the country is becoming a major phenomenon. Especially in the densely populated and economically developed parts of the country, such as the Adriatic coasts area little more developed than the others, in terms of the tourism. The cities in various sizes, such as Durres, Vlora and Saranda are the major touristic destinations considering by the bays, caves, towns and the villages in the Albania. However, the level of the expected developments of the tourism activities has not reached yet, to the wished stages in this country.

Keywords: *The Tourism Potential, Geographical Sources, Destinations and the Touristic Activities.*

Introduction

The main purpose of this study which is called the "Sea Tourism in Albania" is to seek the general conditions of the sea tourism in Albania and the characteristics of the major touristic destinations and the problems of these destinations and is to provide solutions to submit, for these problems. The visits on the tourism activities is counted neither very new, nor very old in the Albania. Indeed, the development of tourism in the Albania, which was commenced in 1929 primarily and had started with the "Royal Motor Tourist Club" activities. The basic purpose of this organization was to have visits for the business purposes. The most of the participants were coming from Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, and those from the other neighboring countries, such as Greece (Klodiana, 2005). The Albania, up to the years of 1900s, was governed by the Communist Party, which ruled the country almost isolated from the World even though they were in the heart of Europe, because of the political and economic terms and conditions. After this date, depending on the changing management and approaches to the outer World had been formed and were implemented outsourcing policies, however due to the domestic political mixtures within the country the expanding of the touristic visits of the country could not find the floor of realization and development.

While looking at the historical developments of the visits to the Albania, the visits used to be for the economical reasons in the beginning and was as called the "Business Trips". However, in nowadays and depending on the geographical sources known as "Resting Tourism" that the "sun-sea-sand" is popular within the package holidays. Outside from the resting tourism, the culture, health, business and religious tourism are the other important pillars in the tourism sector.

First of all and as it is known, for a geographical area that to become a tourism destination, depends on the existence of the components of "Attractions, Accessibility and Accommodation". In the name of "Attractiveness" and due to the development of the tourism activities, the Albania, itself may attract visitors from the different parts of the World. However, in the point of access to some of the major tourist destinations, the "Access" and the places for the touristic accommodation, which is in the "Accommodation" issue is constitute the biggest obstacle in the development of tourism activities. Therefore, in the Albania there are no internationally important destinations and areas.

Methods

The Geographical study as entitled "The Sea Tourism in Albania" has been made in accordance with the basic principles of the Science. During this operation, the basic geography books which are written, in both languages, in English and in Turkish were applied into, as well as the other studies conducted in the past were of a varieties of the implemented sources. Also, of the official websites of the various institutions and organizations in the Albania with the various reports published on the internet, papers, and the articles were encouraged to take benefits from. In the same

way, and of all the opportunities of the Internet and in the light of the data obtained from a variety of sources as tables, maps and graphics which had fitted for the purpose and had been presented within this study.

Discussion

An Overview of the Tourism of the Albania

The main goal of the organizations of the "Royal Motor Tourist Club" visits, which was commenced in 1929, were the visits for the business purposes. The visitors were coming to the country from the neighboring countries. However, from the past to the present, the basic starting point of these visitings have been unchanged, but the basic purposes of those who had visited the country had been quite a change. Once the "Business Trips" were leading the tourism and upon the time these business trips stand out by the country's changing economical, political and social shifts and started depending on the "Resting" visits and this has gained importance (Table 1).

Table 1: The visits to the Albania, according to the ratio

According to purpose of visit	%
Resting	82
Business	5
Daily Visits	3
Other Reasons	10

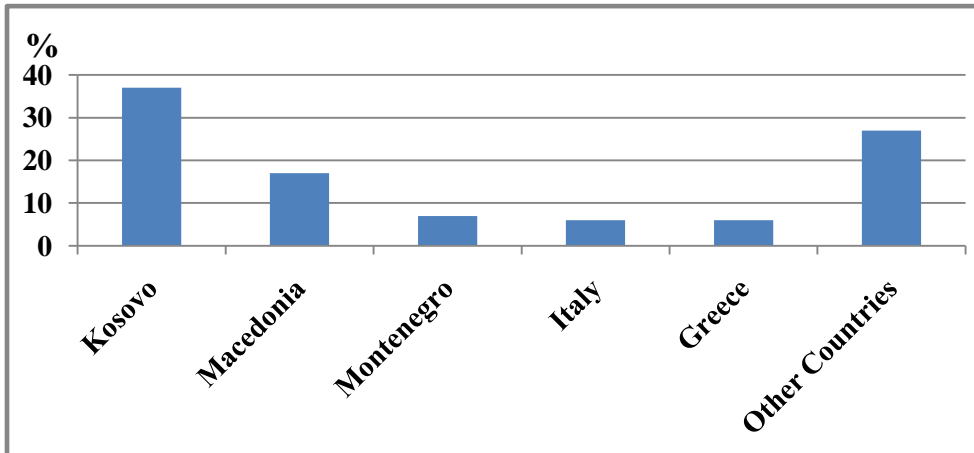
The Source: 2010, The Impact of Tourism Sector in the Economy of Albania, Journal of Studies in Economics and Society

In fact, when we look up at the objectives of arrivals of the visitors who entered the country, to relax was 82%, to work was 5%, other reasons were 10% and those who visited the country on a daily basis was 3% (Uruçi and Boriçi, 2010). In addition, some three million foreign tourists had visited the coasts of the Albania in 2011 (<http://www.lalzitbay.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/02/Lalzit-Bay-Resort-Buyers-Guide-2012.pdf>).

Despite of the global economic downturn and according to the Albanian National Tourism Bureau's reports the percentage of people who had visited the country had increased by 40% in 2009. On the other hand, the visitors who were coming to the country were entering via Durres, Vlora, Shengjin, Saranda and those are to visit the country from the sea ports. Other types of transportations were used by those who enter the country via the road and the airline. The situation exhibits by the continental perspectives that the rate of visits to the Albania, was quite different

from each other. These visits were, almost, from the Continental Europe. In fact, according to the annual report which was published in 2009 by the “National Tourism Bureau” the 92% of those tourists were coming from Europe, the 5% was from America, the 2% was from Asia and 1% of those was from the other places (Uruçi and Boriçi, 2010).

Graphic 1: The rate of the Albania visitors from country to country



The Source: <http://www.jospfest.com/images/albania.pdf>

As stated above, the 92% of those visitings to the Albania were those from the Continental Europe. However, it is based on a remarkable case that the visits to the country were from the countries which has borders with the Albania and that is in the performance of 67%. In fact, according to the reports of the “National Tourism Bureau”, the 37% of it was from the Kosovo, the 17% was from Macedonia, the 7% was from Montenegro, the 6% was from Italy and Greece and the rates of the attracted tourists is in (Graphic 1). In addition, the number of visitors to the country by the year, in 2010 was 5.577.929persons (<http://www.jospfest.com/images/albania.pdf>). The majority of the visitors who came to the country was for the summer season, including those who visited in June, July and August.

The Coastal Tourism and Attractions

The physical geographic factors on the development of tourism are the coastal climate, the coastal geomorphology and vegetation, as well as population, settlement and economical activities such as human factors had played a role (Doğaner, 2001). Due to the touristic understanding, a significant portion of the population on the earth goes to the seaside. In the traditional sense, the domestic and foreign tourists are taking the “sun-sea-sand” package holidays as the most popular forms of the holidays and as referred to the most popular destinations are the coasts (Özgüç, 2007).

For the realization of a desirable tourism activity by the leading factor of the climate and other components, especially the structure of the coasts, quality and the geographical resources has very important place, such as the beaches. The Albania is the country with the greatest number of sunny days in Europe after Spain. The sunny days are 250 on the northeast and approximately 325 days on the southwest. In fact, the average temperature values' between the months of May to October is 23-31 °C in the country. From this point on, the view on the basis of the country's climate, is very ideal for coastal tourism. At the north coasts of the Adriatic, the tides are seen clearly, in The Mediterranean, which is submerged under water and is connected to the Atlantic Ocean, by the large massed lands and thus also been separated from the oceans.

The coasts of the Adriatic and the Ionian has different topographical features. The presence of the particularly flat land areas which are suitable for production of the large hotels on the just off the shores of the Adriatic coasts, is an "Access" to the sea and to the beach has a vital importance in this respect. Indeed, some destination areas with the tourism potential on the shores of the Ionian, such as Himara and Saranda has not developed much, because of the difficulties on the "Access" issue. As you know, the all of a sudden deepening, is increasing the risk of drowning in the sea. However, especially the deepening of the Adriatic Sea as to be little by little is creating suitable environment for the families and children. Also, the weak generation of the canopy trees, especially for the coastal tourism is creating insufficient and a negative situation while are on just off the beaches of the Adriatic and the Ionian coasts.

The coasts of the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea by the geomorphological characteristics are different. The Adriatic coasts are characterized by wide sandy beaches and shallow waters. However, the shores of the Adriatic coasts exhibits a different property than the Ionian coasts. Immediately next to the coast, the mountains are arising behind the narrow coastal strip and cliffs and caves that attracts attention.

The Adriatic coasts are the coasts of alluvial plains and reaches to the width of 4-50 km with a length of approximately 250 km. The consisting of a series of small areas of the deltas and the lagoons formed by the river with 9 units. The length of the Ionian Sea is 170 km and begins from the Karaburun, on the edge of the nose, and goes to the south of Greece and ends at the Stilo Island (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/epr/epr_studies/albania.pdf). The Adriatic shores are more inhabited then the Ionian coasts. In addition, there are also differences, in terms of economic and population, between these bi-coastal areas. More than 50% of the population were collected along the capital city of Tirana which is located only 30 km away from the sea. The Adriatic coasts had been collected the 80% of the economical activities and 70% of the agricultural activities on itself. In addition, there is a great improvement in this area on the tourism activities. The Ionian coasts has usually small traditional villages and towns. These areas are particularly important for the Albania on many areas of unspoilt offers on the tourist values (<http://aguas.igme.es/igme/publica/tiac-02/ALBANIA-I.pdf>).

The Various Characteristics and Spatial Distribution

The Albania, due to its tourism potential is in lack of an international scales in the tourism destinations. Indeed, the participants in the tourism activities since the 2001 year, is accounted for 80% of them were the Albanians. The holiday destinations which has potentials, such as the beaches, especially are in central and southern areas with the large geographical and human resources.

The major tourist destinations in the Albania are concentrated at the major cities, the villages and at the towns of which are closer to those cities and to various sized of beaches and caves.

In **Shengjin**, the advanced transportation network which has given the advantage to the fairly large beaches. The “Access” to these beaches is more than opportunities and contributed development to the environment. In addition, the impact of the growth potential of Shengjin’s is the Italian expeditions on a regular basis. The appearance of Shengjin's had diversified geographically with the presence of the pine trees, wetlands, wild pitches and the various local sense.

The Lalzit Gulf, on the shores of the Adriatic is an important tourist destinations. The location is very suitable for transportation. In fact, the airport is in 20 minutes away and also is in 30 minutes away from Tirana, the capital is located in the economic heart of the country. In the same way the city of Durres is close to the Gulfs of Bari and Brindisi of Italy. By the distance, Italy is to be close and therefore playing to an important role in attracting the mass of the Italian tourists. In addition, a variety of activities and opportunities for visitors from throughout the Cape of Rodoni is possible. The main activities are the swimming, diving, sailing, boat tours and boat trips.

In Durres, the artificial irrigation system, which the restructuring process was in 1970 had accelerated the construction and development during those years. This change and development of the Velipoja, Shengjini, Kune, Gjiri Lalzit, Durresi, Golemi, Mali Robit, Spill, Divjaka, such as Darezeza and Plazhi i Ri Vlorë has led to an increase in the value of touristic beaches (<http://www.albaniantourism.com/>). The Durres beach, located 39 km away from the capital Tirana is the country's most populated and most famous beach. The length of it is 6 km and has a very large coastline. The depth of the sea, is increasing little by little, and thus to create an ideal environment for the children and the families. Here are available hotels, motels, villas, bars, restaurants and discos and have the major touristic facilities as outstanding. Within the last few years, the visitors are coming to Tirana from Kosovo and Macedonia on a daily basis, as well as the visitors from the other places (<http://www.akt.gov.al/index.php?lang=2>).



Map 1: The distribution of the most important sights of the Albanian Coasts

In addition, there are many hotel in Durres that are made by the Albanian investors. Therefore, by setting up some attractive coastal settlements in Durres and a variety of sectors was impaired by the activities of the people. In addition, the beach is being shaped by the second homes which was built up in this sections.

One of the most important beach in the south of the country is the **Mali Robit** beach of Durres. During the summer time it is quite a numbered by the people. It is located 40 minutes away from the capital Tirana. By the geographical view of the pine trees along the coast is a quite impressive exhibit. The Mali Robit's one of the most important feature and when the beaches been reduced by visitors, even the most numbered of visitors of the country's is visiting the Mali Robit. The **Vlora**, by the point of providing a choice of accommodation and other services to quite a lot of visitors. Also an important point at the Vlora is the availability to "access" to the beaches. To here, can be reached on a daily basis by the sea and ferry. In addition, the Tirana airport is in 3 hours away. The Vlora, is located at the junction of the Adriatic and the Ionian seas. The port and thermal power plant which is available will be led to the growth of Vlora.

The main activities in the Ionian coas are the swimming, diving, sailing and the surfing

(http://www.globalbispartners.com/uploads/albainan_tourism_today.pdf).The

Himarra town has tourism potential, although is an ancient town located at the foot of the mountain and is a main destination which suffering with the "accommodation and accessing" problems. The touristic tools, such as hotels and restaurants are less in number.

The **Saranda** is a touristic town, because of its geographic feature had the opportunity on diving in the tourism development. The Saranda has small hotels and restaurants, but most of them are far from giving the needs of visitors from the Europe. On the other hand, one of the biggest problem of the Saranda's is to encounter, in terms of tourism opportunities, by limited "Access" to the beaches and the "accommodation" needs is yet remains unresolved. An easy access to Saranda is possible by the ferry-boat from Corfu. Usually there are the shale and gravel beaches in Saranda. Those are the Italian and Greek touristic destinations, especially the high prices of there is making the beaches of Saranda more attractive. The Saranda beaches are artificial, but safe and clean beaches as human elements. It is located 25 minutes away from the beaches of Saranda to **Ksamil** which is famous for its white sand beaches and coastal footprint. Although the important touristic beach **Dhermi** still has the "Access" problem even thought has touristic potential.

To be witness to the "underwater world, flora, fauna, cultural heritage and to see the archeological cultural values and photographing, filming and sport fishing carried out for the purpose of promotional, sporting and educational purposes only and the shore dives, accommodation and hospitality services in the field of tourism" (Yaşar, 2011), is known as the "Water Dives" that the Adriatic and the Ionian coasts (Vlora, Lalzit Bay, Himara, Saranda, the Karaburun Peninsula, Carp Islands), it has a significant potential for such a tourism. In particular, having the clean sea-coast, the sea and the preservation of the rich flora and fauna, with suitable climate (above water temperature, sea surface temperature and wind direction of the impact, etc.) has direct impact on the development of the water diving. The water diving activities is causing for a long summer tourist season. Because, it takes the water diving activities, from the spring to autumn. In addition, along the Adriatic and the

Ionian shores, the Greek, Illyrian and Roman-era historical geography of human resources are places of settlements, in terms of the visitors.

Results

The Albania has the potential of to have a significant, tourism resources and showing the effects of the communist rulings in the country for many years, and to be almost in the heart of Europe but was away from the Western World and been isolated. Due to the communist management and administration it was a communist country for many years, therefore was a country of wonder and interest. However, after 1990, along with the changing of the understanding and the management policy and the outreach has opened its doors to the outside World and this situation is also reflected in tourism and in the tourism-related sectors.

The Adriatic coasts with its natural resources has many important attractions. Therefore, in the recent years there had been intensive migrations to the shores. Because of the rapid urban migration, the coasts has become an urban area. The arising of the illegal constructions in the coastal areas and the suburbs and via it's rapid population growth is one of the emerging views of the human geography. "In order to withdraw, any person, into tourism activities and encourage him to travel, needs to mobilize the natural, cultural, artistic and technological possibilities in an organized manner. Also, in order to achieve this, the candidate touristic district's natural and human resources should be detected and then to be evaluated within the tourism understanding is necessary" (Akova, 2008). The first of all and for any geographic areas to attract the tourists, depends on the "Appeals, Access and Accommodation" components. The cities on the Albania's Ionian coasts, such as Saranda and Himarra, especially on the attractions and on the touristic destinations, the "Access and Accommodation" are extremely limited in terms of tourism activities and that to be an important problem. Mainly, the problems of accommodation is not just applies for the destinations on the shores of the Ionian, but on the other destinations on the shores of the Adriatic too. In the long, medium and short-terms, in order to eliminate the negative effects on the development of these places to "Access" is to be resolved by using the existing potentials is carrying a vital importance.

The presence of the rich geographical sources (shore structure, quality, generation of a forest canopy just off the beaches and there is a large, clean, and to be safe) and easy arrivals to the beach and the sea and having favorable climatic conditions, lithological structure of the coast, the investment facilities, are important tools for tourism activities on the basis of "Appeal". Despite of these attractions, especially on the Adriatic coasts, this appeal has not been transformed to the European and to the World tourism markets yet. A place of which should become a part of the tourism destination, needs the growth factors that plays a role with the "Appeal and Access to Accommodations". In the recent years and on the shores of the Adriatic, especially in Durres, Vlora, as well as places such as on the shores of the Ionian sea

at the Saranda and Himarra, the accommodation needs for tourists and the touristic needs on the dining, entertainment and so on, is necessary and that in the many hotels, motels, resort villages has the services to be provided too. These investments are made for the needs of the guest accommodations, dining and entertainment but, in spite of those services they are far from the European standards. To reach to the European standards regarding to the tourism activities in Albania and having the number of visitors coming each year increasingly and on behalf of the tourism sector to become the locomotive of the economy, is possible with the policies on the "Time and Place" by the short, medium and long terms advancements and the political stability. In another word and within the framework of the political determination and the economical opportunities and the between regional, national, regional, local and sectoral planning is possible with the "Tourism Development Programs" and those are the tourism industry's opportunities to catch up with the European standards.

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