

# **The Impact of Tourism Sector Development in the Albanian Economy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Today tourism is viewed as one of the largest and dynamically developing sectors of external economic activities in the world. The development of tourism sector is associated with considerable volumes of foreign currency inflows, new employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and new management experiences. All of these together positively contribute to the social and economic development of the countries. Beside these there are also other effects of tourism which will be considered in this paper.*

*The aim of the research is to examine the impact of tourism sector development on the country economy.*

*The methods of research are: analysis and synthesis of the scientific literature discussing the positive and negative impacts of tourism sector on the social and economic development of the countries; the systematic statistical data analysis of the direct contribution of the sector on the GDP and employment of Albania as a country in its infancy of development, compared to other European countries in maturity. The statistical data used in this research is provided by INSTAT (Albanian Institute of Statistics), AKT (National Tourism Agency) and TSA (Tourism Satellite Account), a methodology quantified by the UN Statistics Division for the statistical data provided for the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Albania, Economic Development, Tourism Sector.*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *L8*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Growth in tourism sector is seen as a major contributor to the increase of economic activity for the country. It offers employment opportunities in both large and small communities and is a major industry in developed countries, and the dominant economic activity in some communities. The impacts of tourism to a community are broader than the economical one; they can be sorted into the following categories which have their positive and negative sides:

1. Economic
2. Environmental
3. Social and cultural.

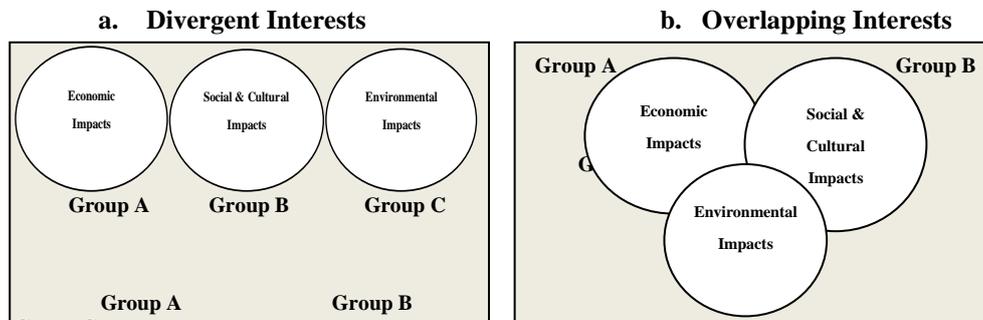
There exist conflicts within different groups related to their concerning on tourism impacts. One group may be interested on the economic impact of tourism, while another one may be interested on the cultural or environmental impacts. So the interests of each group may be

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separate from the other ones, as shown in Figure 1a. In Group A, Economic Impacts, in the interested parties it may be included the business organizations and people in need for a job. In Group B, Social & Cultural Impacts, it may be included all the residents who dislike the influx of visitors. While in Group C, Environmental Impacts may be included local outdoor enthusiasts concerned about changes in natural resources.

There may be also cases, where the interest groups of one area, will have also interests in other areas of the impact of tourism, as shown in Figure 1b. The intersection areas show the common interests of all the groups. The larger the intersection areas are, the higher is the collaboration possibility between them for giving a solution to the tourism issues.



**Figure 1: Interest in Tourism Impacts**

Source: Kreag, (2001), p. 4

Gunn (1994, p.16) stated that there is no other form of development “that has so many far-reaching tentacles as doe’s tourism”. In developing the tourism industry the goal of maximizing the selected positive impacts, possible in the community, while minimizing the potential negative impacts, should never be forgot. A more complete viewpoint can be provided by the concept of sustainable tourism development, because it can help policy-makers make more effective policies and plans designed to realize the full social and economic potential of the tourism industry (ESCAP, 2001).

The concept of sustainable tourism came up as a convergence of the popularity and attention given to sustainable development in the global community. Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 43). In the 1993 inaugural edition of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Bramwell and Lane connect sustainable tourism to the 1973 release of Ecological Principles for Economic Development (Dasmann et al., 1973 cited in Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

There are many definitions of sustainable tourism. Butler (1993, p. 29) defines sustainable tourism as “Tourism which is in a form which can maintain its viability in an area for an infinite period of time”, but the most widely accepted definition is that of the World Tourism Organization. They define sustainable tourism as "meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future...leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems" (WTO, 1998, p. 21).

Eber (1992) gives another view of the concept: "if tourism is to be truly beneficial to all concerned . . . and sustainable in the long-term, it must be ensured that resources are not over-consumed, that natural and human environments are protected, that tourism is integrated with other activities, that it provides real benefits to the local communities . . . that local people are involved and included in tourism planning and implementation, and that cultures and people are respected."

Although the popularity and importance that sustainable tourism development gained, it has been difficult to define and put into operation. Harrison (1996, p. 72) stated, "by combining development (inevitably a value laden concept) with sustainability (which is allegedly non-operational and reformist) we thus arrive at the doubly vague concept of sustainable development, only then to focus on one aspect of this dubious process-that of sustainable tourism".

In 1996 in Bellagio, Italy was held a meeting which was concluded with a set of principles (Table 1) in order to attain sustainable development:

**Table 1. The Bellagio Principles for Sustainable Development**

1. 'Sustainable development' should be clearly defined in its specific context;
2. Sustainability should be viewed in an holistic sense, including economic, social and ecological components;
3. Notions of equity should be included in any perspective of sustainable development;
4. Time horizon should span both human and ecosystem timescales, and the spatial scale should include local and long-distance impacts on people and ecosystems;
5. Progress towards sustainable development should be based on the measurement of a limited number of indicators based on standardized measurement.
6. Methods and data employed for assessment of progress should be open and accessible to all;
7. Progress should be effectively communicated to all;
8. Broad participation is required;
9. Allowance should be made for repeated measurement in order to determine trends and incorporate results of experience;
10. Institutional capacity in order to monitor progress towards SD needs to be assured.

**Source:** Bell & Morse (1999), p. 17

In order to have sustainable tourism development careful planning and assessment are very important parts of it. To provide a long-term development and positive impacts of the tourism sector, sustainable tourism development is evidenced under the control of government and all the interest groups which are called stakeholders by interconnecting the three main components: social, environmental and economic aspects, working together. Edgell (2006, p. 1) stated "sustainable tourism, properly managed, can become a major

vehicle for the realization of humankind's highest aspirations in the quest to achieve economic prosperity while maintaining social, cultural, environmental integrity".

The aim of the research is to examine the impact of the development of tourism sector on the country development and foresee the ways for a sustainable tourism development.

The methods of research are: analysis and synthesis of the scientific literature discussing the positive and negative impacts of tourism sector on the social and economic development of the countries; the systematic statistical data analysis of the direct contribution of the sector on the GDP and employment of Albania as a country in its infancy of development, compared to other European countries in maturity. The statistical data used in this research is provided by INSTAT (Albanian Institute of Statistics), AKT (National Tourism Agency) and TSA (Tourism Satellite Account), a methodology quantified by the UN Statistics Division for the statistical data provided for the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism.

After the introduction part the positive and negative impacts of tourism are analyzed. The third chapter provides an overview of the tourism sector in Albania. In the fourth chapter a systematic statistical data analysis of the direct contribution of the sector on the GDP and employment of Albania as a country in its infancy of development, compared to other European countries in maturity takes place. Based on the information generated by the study, chapter 5 offers the conclusions part.

## **1. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF TOURISM**

### **1.1 Economic Impacts**

Developing tourism sector increases the inflows of tourists and by the same time the number of businesses and employment opportunities. As tourism grows, new opportunities are offered for investment, development, infrastructure spending, new income is generated and standards of living are increased. Also public utilities such as water, lighting, sidewalks, parking, etc. can be improved, by which both tourists and residents benefit.

On the other side it should also be considered that generally the jobs offered by the tourism sector are low-paying, no-insurance, and seasonal ones. The seasonal tourism may form high risk under or unemployment issues. Sometimes labor may be imported rather than hired locally. The increase in demand for goods and services may turn in an increase of prices and the cost of living. In cases the owners of the businesses are not local, than the profits are exported out of the community to the non-local owners.

### **1.2 Environmental Impacts**

The quality of the environment is essential to tourism, however, tourism's relationship with the environment is complex - many activities can have negative impacts on the environment, by gradually destroying the environmental resources on which it depends. Some of these impacts are linked with the construction of roads & tourism facilities. Other negative impacts occur when the number of visitors is higher than the environment can afford. Uncontrolled conventional tourism and can lead to soil erosion, increased pollution, discharges into the sea, etc. Sometimes overuses of water resources of hotels, swimming

pools and personal use by tourists occur, resulting in water shortages and degradation of water supplies.

On the other side, tourism can contribute to the protection and conservation of the environment by raising the awareness of environmental values and increasing their economic importance by which will be financed their protection and restoration.

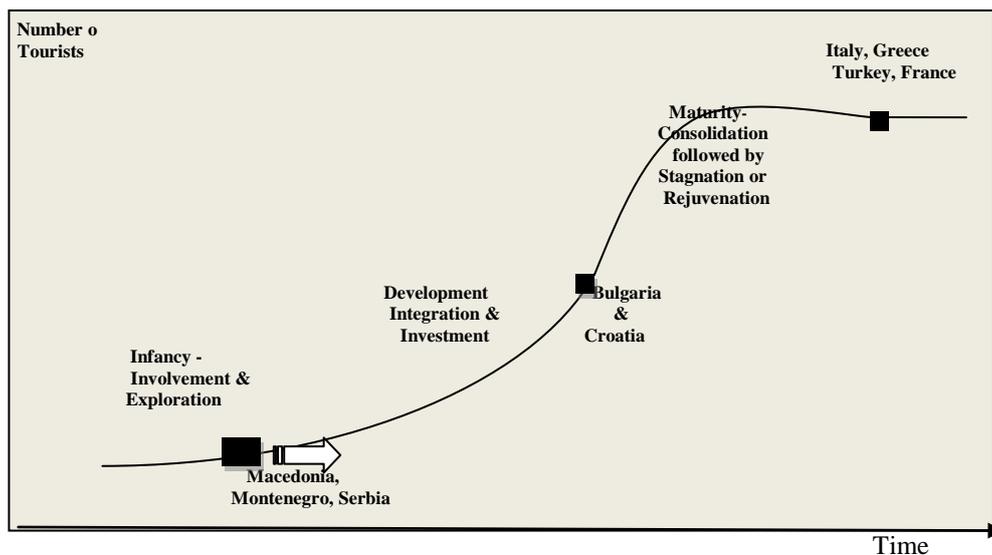
### 1.3 Social & Cultural Impacts

There exist concerns that tourism development may lead to the loose of cultural identity of the hosting community. Tourism can serve as a mean for cultural exchange, learning about traditions of different countries. It can be also used as a tool for raising awareness, by strengthening the regional identity with the attribution of local products and achievements. But sometimes assimilation, conflict and artificial reconstruction may also happen. If presenting the community culture to tourists helps preserving that culture, by the same time there exist also the risk of diluting or even destroying it.

## 2 TOURISM SECTOR IN ALBANIA

### 2.1 Albania`s Conceptual Evolution as a Tourist Destination

Hypothetically all tourism destinations follow a product life cycle concept (Figure 2) whereby sales proceed slowly at first as the destination gains market appeal and investor confidence (infancy), then experience rapid growth and investment (development), then stabilize (maturity) and subsequently decline or rejuvenate (World Bank, 2009).



**Figure 2. Albania`s Conceptual Evolution as a Tourist Destination**

Source: adapted from Butler (2006)

Albania, like the other Western Balkan countries Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are still in their infancy, which need more involvement and exploration. Bulgaria and Croatia are countries having the tourism sector in development and need more integration and

investment, while Italy, Greece, Turkey and France have reached their maturity, but are face to face with the risk of stagnation or rejuvenation followed after the consolidation.

## 2.2 Albania & the New Mediterranean Frontier

UNWTO forecasts arrivals to Central/Eastern Europe are expected to grow rapidly and that by 2020 nearly one in three visitors to Europe will choose a Central or Eastern Europe destination (World Bank, 2009). This indicates that opportunities for Albanian tourism sector to expand are high. In particular, the Western Balkans states of Albania, Montenegro and Croatia all share a piece of the Adriatic coastline being coined by the travel and tourism industry as “the new Mediterranean frontier” (World Bank, 2009).

## 2.3 Tourist Arrivals

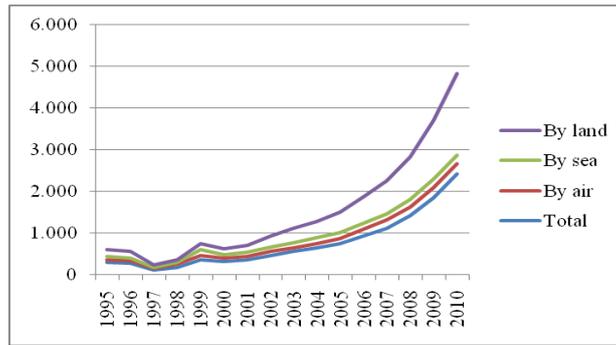
The majority of tourists to Albania come for holidays, as opposed to business purposes. The number of arrivals has increased more than two-fold from 2006 to 2010 (Table 2). From the total arrivals in 2010, about 68% came for holidays, 2% for business purposes, 7.2% as transit and the remaining for other purposes. Although there is a high increase of arrivals through years, compared to the other countries of the region, the number of foreign visitors in Albania is very low.

**Table 2. Arrivals of Foreigners in Albania by Purpose of Travel (2006-2010)**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total	937,038	1,126,514	1,419,191	1,855,638	2,417,337
Holidays	697,623	911,907	1,107,583	1,544,218	1,643,254
Business	47,674	66,432	78,874	51,601	47,223
Transit	13,078	27,675	89,148	80,361	174,468
Others	178,663	120,500	143,586	179,458	552,392

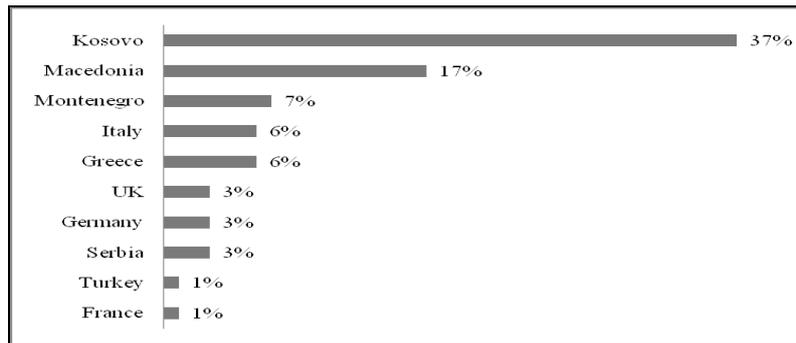
**Source:** Data from INSTAT <http://www.instat.gov.al> & AKT (2011), <http://www.akt.gov.al> processed by the author

From 2,418,000 total tourists who arrived in Albania for the year 2010, 80% came by land, 10% by air and 10% by sea (Chart 1). The fact that most of the tourists (90% of them) came by land or sea, shows that most of these arrivals are from neighboring countries. Also as Chart 2 shows, for the year 2009 most of the visitors (37%) are from Kosovo, followed by Macedonia (17%) and Montenegro (7%). Arrivals of tourists by land has sharply increased from 2001 to 2010 (12 times), while the increase of arrivals by sea 11% and by air 17%.



**Chart 1: Arrivals of Foreigners by Means of Transport (in thousands) (1995 – 2010)**

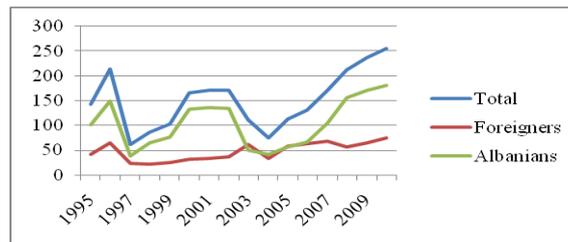
Source: Data from INSTAT processed by the author, <http://www.instat.gov.al>



**Chart 2. Foreigners Visiting Albania by Country of Origin (January-December 2009)**

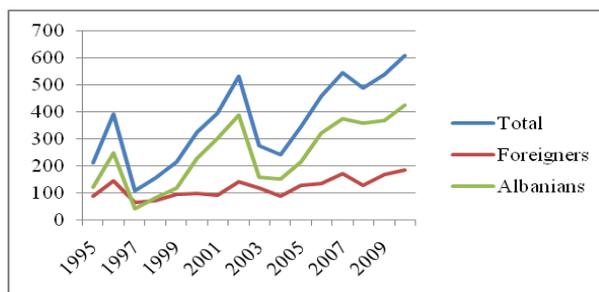
Source: adapted from AKT (2010), p. 33

Political and economical situation in Albania has directly affected positively or negatively the development of tourism sector in Albania. Albanian as well as foreign tourist arrivals and overnights in hotels have been affected from the transition period. While in 1996 the overnights in hotels of foreigners were 144,000 nights (Chart 4), in 1997 it will be 66,000 (54% decrease). Sharp decreases happened also after 2002 and 2007. From 2008 the overnights in hotels for foreigners and Albanians too has increased, showing a more stable political and economical situation as well as more comfortable environment.



**Chart 3. Arrivals of Foreigners & Albanians In Hotels (in thousands) (1995 – 2010)**

Source: Data from INSTAT processed by the author, <http://www.instat.gov.al>

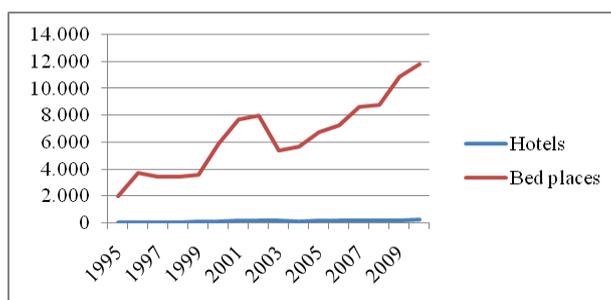


**Chart 4. Overnights of Foreigners & Albanians In Hotels (in thousands) (1995 – 2010)**

Source: Data from INSTAT processed by the author, <http://www.instat.gov.al>

## 2.4 Hotels & their Capacity

The growth in the number of bed places correlates to the number of tourists arriving to Albania (Chart 5). In 1996 there were 81 hotels with a total capacity of 3,719 beds, while in 2010, 290 hotels with totally 11,793 beds. In 2003, as a result of decrease in arrivals in hotels and their overnights, the number in bed places will decrease too. After 2003, as the number in arrivals of foreigners and Albanians in hotels has risen, the number in beds and hotels too, has risen related to the demand. However, most rooms are in small locally owned hotels and guesthouses and outdated government facilities throughout the country (World Bank, 2009).



**Chart 5. Hotels & their Capacity (1995 – 2010)**

Source: Data from INSTAT processed by the author, <http://www.instat.gov.al>

## 2.5 Comparative Advantage of Tourism Sector in Albania

The international competitiveness of the tourism sector in Albania can be developed due to the comparative advantages that it has, listed as follows:

- ✚ Among the European countries, after Spain, Albania is listed second for the warm and sunny's days,
- ✚ There are no visa requirements, which facilitates the foreigners entrance,
- ✚ Foreigners are curious to visit Albania, after the fall of half century lasting communism,
- ✚ Part of the tourists, are day visitors, having their vacations on the neighbors countries.

## 2.6 Weaknesses of Tourism Sector in Albania

Some of the weaknesses and problems that the tourism sector in Albania is facing can be listed as follows:

- There exists a lack of a suitable infrastructure for tourism activities & businesses;
- Insufficient dialogue within stakeholders for sustainable development of tourism sector;
- Personnel providing the services is not trained;
- Promotion of the tourism sector is insufficient;
- Lack of investments by government, local institutions & businesses enterprises;
- Weak environmental standards.

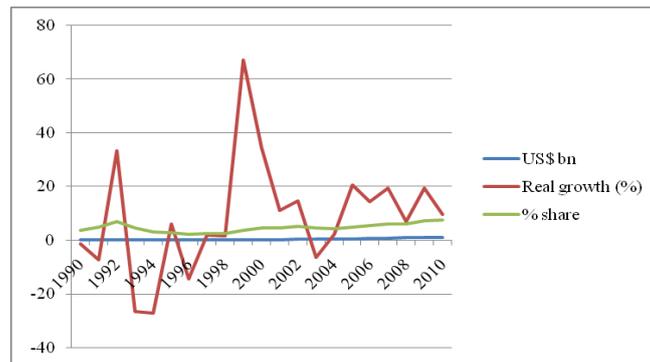
## 3 CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL & TOURISM SECTOR TO THE ECONOMY

### 3.1 Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to GDP in Albania, Compared with the Maturity Countries

The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP reflects the `internal` spending on Travel & Tourism (total spending within a particular country on Travel & Tourism by residents and non-residents for business and leisure purposes) as well as government `individual` spending - spending by government on Travel & Tourism services directly linked to visitors, such as cultural (e.g. museums) or recreational (e.g. national parks) (WTTC Report, 2011).

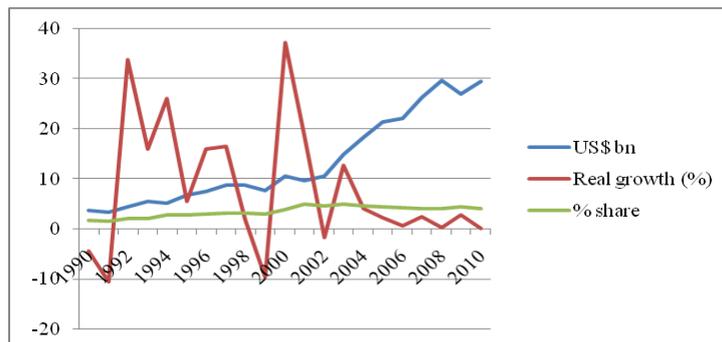
According to World Travel & Tourism Council statistics provided by Tourism Satellite Account, the contribution (direct) of the travel & tourism sector to the GDP of Albania has increased from 0.06 billion US\$ in 1990 to 0.889 billion US\$ in 2010 (Chart 6). This 20 year period has not been stable for the sector, due to its sharp increase and decreases affected by the politico-economical situation of the country. Albania has reached its highest real growth in tourism in 1999 by 67.1%, but unfortunately it will be followed by a sharp decrease 2003 with a negative value of 6.4%. The year 2003 will be the last year with negative values in tourism growth, and will be followed with more stable increases. For the year 2010, the real growth in tourism sector will be 9.7%, lower than the 19.4% value of the previous year. The contribution to GDP of the tourism sector as 2010 is 7.4%, showing slight increases since 2004.

As it was stated above, tourism sector in Albania is in its infancy, while countries like Turkey, France, Greece and Italy, have already reached their maturity in this sector. The charts below (Chart 7, 8, 9 and 10) give data related to the contribution of the tourism sector to the GDP of each of these countries. The contribution for 2010 in US\$ (billion) of the tourism sector is 29.497 for Turkey, 99.996 for France, 15.79 for Greece and 65.477 for Italy. Greece has the highest % share in GDP by 5.4 (lower than the 7.4% in Albania), followed by Turkey with 4%, France 3.8% and Italy 3.1%. During the 20 years period there no sharp increases or decreases in the percentage share of the sector has happened for any of the countries, while real growth percentage has shown more instability in Turkey.



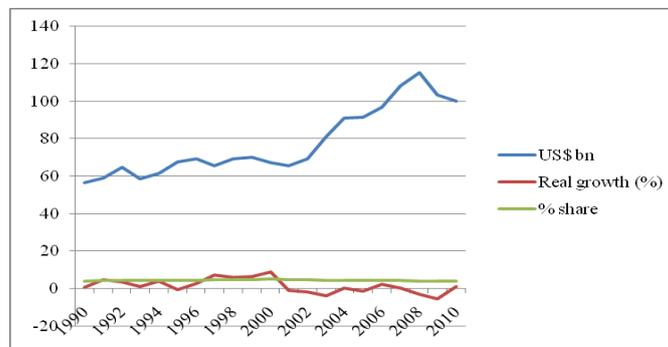
**Chart 6. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to GDP in Albania (1990-2010)**

**Source:** Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)



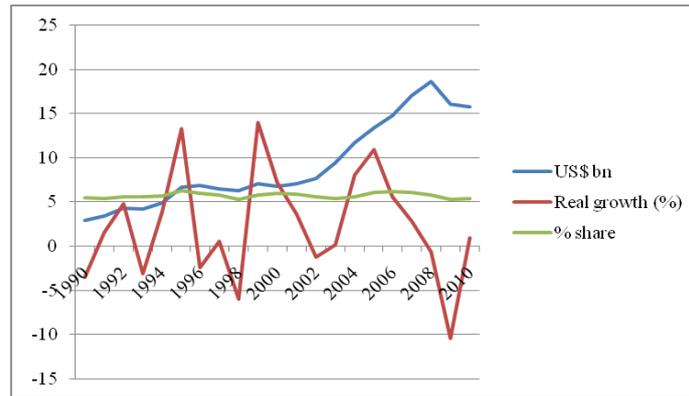
**Chart 7. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to GDP in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in Turkey**

**Source:** Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)



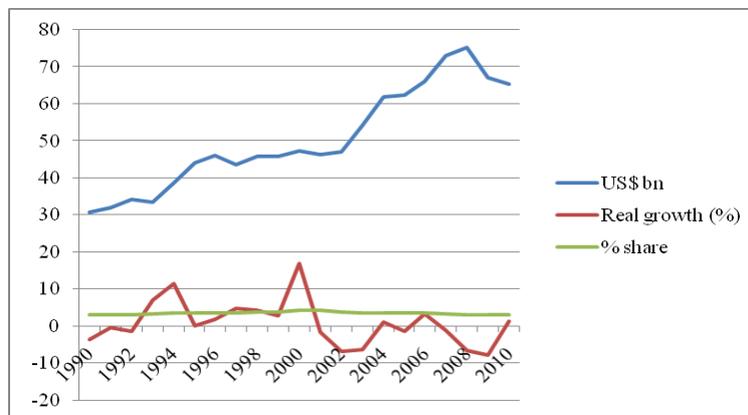
**Chart 8. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to GDP in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in France**

**Source:** Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)



**Chart 9. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to GDP in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in Greece**

Source: Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)



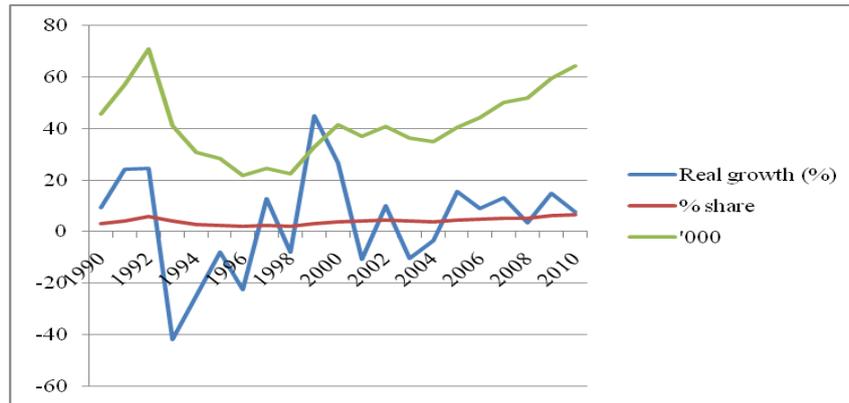
**Chart 10. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to GDP in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in Italy**

Source: Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)

### 3.2 Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to Employment in Albania, Compared with the Maturity Countries

The tourism sector in Albania contributes only 6.6% to the total employment (Chart 11). The number of employees in this sector for the year 2010 is 64,200 lower than 70,900 employed in 1992. The decrease in employees after 1992 can be said to be as a result in the decrease in the % share sector from 6.8% to 2.2% in 1996 (chart 6). The number of employees in 1996 will be 21.800, a decrease of 72% from the year 1992. From 2004 there is a gradual increase in the number of employees, and the share of contribution to the total value has increased from 3.8% to 6.6%. The real growth percentage of travel & tourism sector to employment during this 20 year period, as chart 6 & 11 show, is directly related to

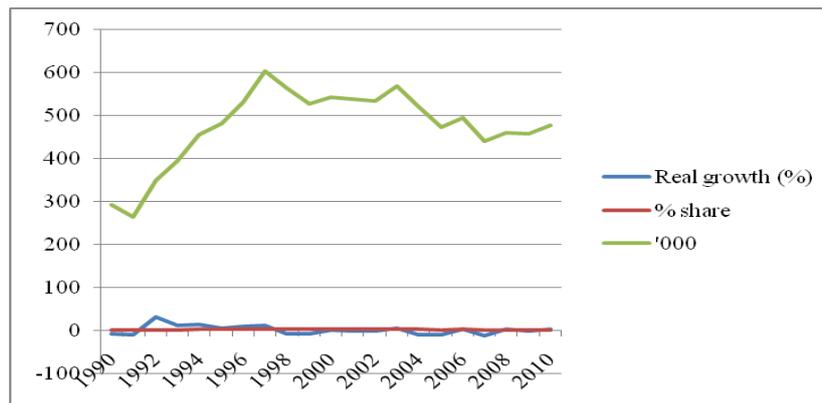
the real growth percentage of contribution to GDP. As tourism sector direct contribution to GDP will increase, the direct contribution to employment to will increase.



**Chart 11. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to Employment in Albania (1990-2010)**

Source: Data from WTTC processed by the author, [http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)

For the countries in the maturity stage, the number of employees in this industry for the year 2010 is 477,300 in Turkey, 1,145,700 in France, 322,000 in Greece and 832,100 in Italy (Chart 12).

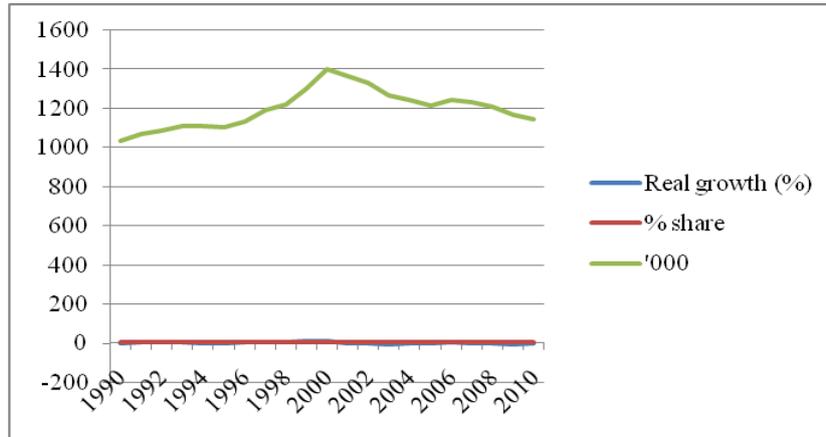


**Chart 12. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to Employment in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in Turkey**

Source: Data from WTTC processed by the author, [http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)

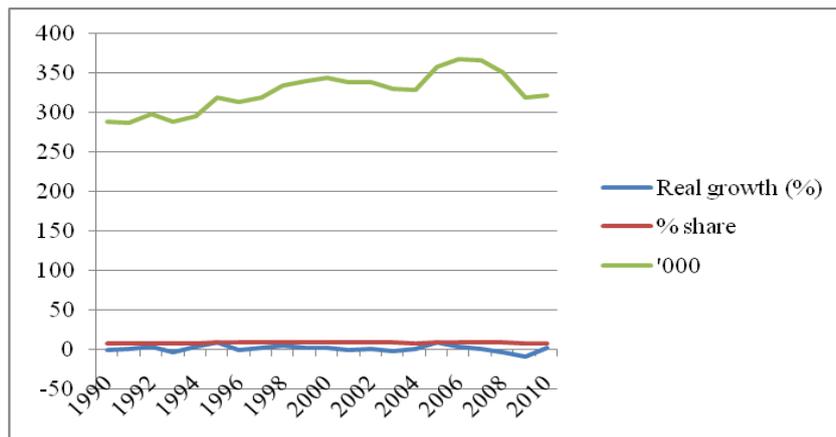
For the contribution to total employment as in GDP share Greece again is ranked first with 7.7%, France is ranked second with 4.4% while for GDP contribution was ranked third, Italy ranked last for GSP contribution is ranked third with 3.6% and Turkey is ranked fourth with 2.1% while it was second in GDP contribution (Chart 7 & 12). Real growth

percentage and percentage share of the sector employment is more stable during the period for these countries than in Albania. Fluctuations in the real growth percentage contribution to GDP have not affected too much the real growth contribution to employment, showing a more stable and consolidated employment sector.



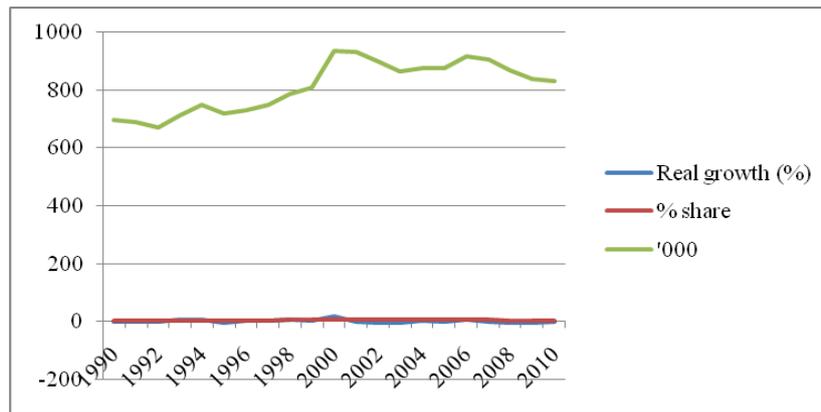
**Chart 13. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to Employment in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in France**

Source: Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)



**Chart 14. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to Employment in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in Greece**

Source: Data from WTTC processed by the author,  
[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)



**Chart 15. Direct Contribution of Travel & Tourism Sector to Employment in Maturity Countries (1990-2010) in Italy**

**Source:** Data from WTTC processed by the author,

[http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism\\_Research/Economic\\_Data\\_Search\\_Tool/](http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism_Research/Economic_Data_Search_Tool/)

## CONCLUSIONS

Albania is a country positioned in the New Mediterranean Frontier, and has comparative advantage in many areas, showing that the increase in its competitiveness through the development of tourism sector is possible. For a developing country like Albania, tourism is an important sector, which may generate foreign exchange earnings and employment. The sector is still in its infancy and the highly intensive investments are needed.

According to World Travel & Tourism Council statistics provided by Tourism Satellite Account, Travel & Tourism sector has a direct contribution of 7.5% to the GDP of Albania for 2010, which is higher than the contribution it has on the European countries in maturity such as Turkey (4%), France (3.8%), Greece (5.4%) and Italy (3.1%). The direct contribution to employment for Albania in 2010 is 6.6%, lower than contribution in Greece (7.7%), but higher than in Turkey (2.1%), France (4.4%), and Italy (3.6%).

This 20 year period (1990-2010) has not been stable for the sector, due to its sharp increase and decreases affected by the politico-economical situation of the country.

Tourism sector is dominated by private enterprises which purpose is making money by selling experience. So the market planning led by these enterprises has a tendency to forget environmental, social and cultural negative impacts of the sector, by failing to achieve the objective of a sustainable tourism development. For this reason while developing the tourism industry the goal of maximizing the selected positive impacts, possible in the community, while minimizing the potential negative impacts, should never be forgot. This viewpoint can be provided by the concept of sustainable tourism development, which can help policy-makers make more effective policies and plans designed to realize the full social and economic potential of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism development should be evidenced under the control of government and all stakeholders by interconnecting the three main components: social, environmental and economic aspects, working together.

Tourism should not be seen as “the solution” to economic hardship, but as a diversification for the local economy.

Inadequate infrastructure, training, promotion, regulation and political commitment are the main obstacles for the development of tourism in Albania (World Bank, 2009).

The main areas for sustainable tourism development can be development of human resources; managing the positive economic impact of tourism on the community habitants; invest in infrastructure development while managing the environmental issues in order to prevent possible negative impacts which can destroy it; invest in the promotion and preservation of the community culture.

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