





Performance Evaluation of Tourist Destinations: The Case of Vlora Region

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Received: August 30, 2023

Revised: July 1, 2024

Accepted: July 13, 2024

Keywords:

Performance indicators;
Local/regional/national
responsible authorities;
Tourism destination
management



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Abstract: *Management of tourist destinations oriented towards sustainable development is necessary for a competitive international market. The importance of the authorities responsible for the management of tourist destinations, the coordination of activities, and the orientation of interest groups in the design and implementation of policies towards a common goal are in focus today. Given the role, responsibilities, and importance of the authorities responsible for the management of tourist destination management, the need to evaluate their performance in terms of the management and marketing initiatives of the tourist destination is evident.*

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the performance of the responsible authorities regarding the performance evaluation indicators. The research methodology is based on the collection of secondary data on the performance indicators, which belong to the last few years.

The secondary data collected for each indicator served to complete the questionnaire that evaluates the trend of the performance indicators of the local, regional, and national authorities responsible for the management of the tourist destination.

This research provides an understanding of the performance evaluation of the responsible authorities in tourist destination management as well as the importance of evaluating performance indicators in the sustainable management of tourist destinations and taking appropriate measures related to their improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many definitions of the tourist destination viewed from a geographical, sociological, marketing, and management perspective. In addition, the identification of a destination can vary according to a variety of actors (current and potential tourist demand, private local tourist activities, public actors, non-local tourist activities, and host community) and perceptions (Manente, 2008, pp. 1–21). From the point of view of tourism demand, tourists can perceive different meanings of a destination according to their decision-making process, their expectations, and the level of satisfaction they receive from the destination.

The destination is also determined from the point of view of the offer, resources, and identity of the local community. So, the tourist destination is defined (Manente & Minghetti, 2006, pp. 228-237):

- As a tourist place where tourist activities are developed and tourist products are produced and consumed.
- As a tourist product, it includes the resources, activities, and actors of a territory as well as the local community.

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The Tourism Industry includes Accommodation, Food & beverage services, Travel agencies, Tour operators, Car rental and other booking service activities.

Referring to the definitions of the tourist destination, good management of the tourist destination is an opportunity to ensure a good image and perception of it from the point of view of tourists. Good management of a destination means cooperation and partnership between different stakeholders with different priorities in terms of designing and implementing strategies and meeting information needs (Manente, 2008, pp. 1–21).

The evaluation of the performance of a tourist destination is important not only to identify the problems of the destination's development but also to identify the indicators for which the destination performs well, as well as to take the appropriate measures to improve and maintain the performance of the quality indicators of a tourist destination (Cismaru, 2015, p. 105).

Until now, two European tools have been designed and tested, both based on specific indicators: the QUALITEST system, which is a manual that serves for the evaluation of the quality Performance of Tourist Destinations and Services (Qualitest, 2003), and the ETIS system (a toolkit regarding the European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations) (Cismaru, 2015, p. 105). The primary objective of these tools is to enhance the competitiveness of European tourism destinations. The QUALITEST and ETIS systems are extensive collections of indicators that enable an evaluation of destination performance. These systems facilitate the identification of areas requiring intervention for ongoing monitoring and provide a means for comparison with other destinations. Both systems have the potential to contribute to the sustainable growth of tourism within a given tourist location, as evidenced by the stated indicators. A significant benefit of both systems lies in their inherent flexibility, which originates from the diverse range of tourist attractions found throughout Europe. Currently, for the region of Vlora, referring to secondary and primary data, there is no such practice of evaluating the quality performance of the destination based on the quality indicators of a tourist destination.

2. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The research methodology is based on the collection of secondary data for each indicator of the quality of the performance of the tourist destination. The European tool that has been utilized for assessing the performance of a tourist destination is QUALITEST. This tool, as outlined by (Qualitest, 2003, p. 8), encompasses 16 indicators that are categorized into two distinct groups: (i) the quality of the destination and (ii) the quality of the tourist product. The first group focuses on providing information about the background quality of the destination, which includes essential aspects that significantly influence the functioning of tourism in that particular location. The second group focuses on the quality of the tourist product from the perspective of the tourist. It examines the various activities undertaken throughout a typical holiday. In order to assess the current state of a tourist destination's quality and the performance of the authorities responsible for the tourist destination's management regarding the implementation of strategies linked to the quality indicators of a tourist destination, we have consulted statistical data for each indicator of the evaluation of performance quality of the destination. The evaluation of indicator trends is conducted based on the secondary data obtained for each indicator, whereby the assessment is made regarding whether the indicator is experiencing a decline, or growth, remains unchanged, or is not applicable.

3. DATA ANALYSES FOR EACH QUALITY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

The “Percentage growth of the tourism industry in the destination” is used to measure the performance evaluation indicator of the authorities responsible for managing the destination “*Viability of local tourism industry*”. For this reason, data collected have served to see the trend of this indicator related to:

- The generation of income from the tourism industry in the last 5 years in the destination, as well as the increase in the percentage of the tourism industry.
- The growth rate of foreign tourists who have visited Albania in recent years.
- The growth rate of accommodation structures in the destination comes as a result of the increase in the demand for tourists to visit the destination.

Income generated from the tourism industry in the last 5 years in destination. The tourism industry contributed a total value of ALL 58.04 billion in 2021. The share of industries directly related to tourism in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2021 is 3.1 % respectively, accommodation ALL 17.5 billion, Food and beverage services ALL 26.5 billion, Travel agencies, tour operators, car rental and other booking service activities ALL 13.9 billion (INSTAT, 2022b, p. 21). The income generated by the tourism industry has been increasing over the past five years, as shown in Table 1. However, in 2020, due to the COVID-19 situation and the restrictive measures imposed on travelers, there was a decline in income as people were unable to move freely between destinations. Despite the challenging circumstances, the tourism industry experienced a notable increase in income in the year 2021, surpassing the levels seen in previous years.

Table 1. Income generated from the tourism industry in years³.

Year	Total contribution of Tourism to GDP (ALL)	Accommodation (ALL)	Food and beverage services (ALL)	Travel agencies, Tour operators, Car rental and other booking service activities (ALL)
2017	39 Billion	8.5 Billion	25.5 billion	5 billion
2018	45 Billion	8.9 Billion	30.7 billion	5.6 billion
2019	56.3 Billion	13.2 Billion	32.2 billion	10.8 billion
2020	42.4 billion	10.2 Billion	24.6 billion	7.5 billion
2021	58.04 billion	17.5 billion	26.5 billion	13.9 billion

Source: INSTAT, 2019a, 2021a, 2022a, 2022b, 2023

Accommodation Capacities in Albania experienced a growth of 9.2% in the year 2018 when compared to the figures recorded in 2016. The number of accommodation enterprises (hotels, motels, camping, hostels, mountain shelters, and other facilities for short-term stays) for the Vlora Region during 2016–2018 has increased (INSTAT, 2019b, p. 133). In the 2019–2021 period, an average of 1,444 accommodation establishments conducted their activities throughout the country. The number of accommodation establishments increased by 3.7% in 2021 compared with 2019 (INSTAT, 2022c, p. 196), (Table 2).

Foreigners arrived in the country. In the period 2014–2018, the arrivals of foreign citizens in Albania were approximately 23.6 million. Only in 2018, the arrival of foreign citizens was 15.8% higher than in 2017. In 2018, arrivals from Europe’s region accounted for the largest share of foreign citizens’ arrivals 89.5%, increasing by 13.2% (INSTAT, 2019a, p. 8). In 2020, the arrivals of foreign citizens in Albania were approximately 2.7 million. Only in 2020, the number

³ The exchange rate of ALL in US dollars: 1 ALL equals 0.011 US dollars

of foreign citizens is 58.5 % less than 2019. In 2020, arrivals from Europe’s region accounted for the largest share of foreign citizens’ arrivals at 98.5%. Their number has decreased by 54.9 % compared with the previous year (INSTAT, 2022a, p. 15). In 2021, the arrivals of foreign citizens in Albania were approximately 5.7 million. Only in 2021, the arrival of foreign citizens is 2.1 times more than in 2020. In 2021, arrivals from Europe’s region accounted for the largest share of foreign citizens’ arrivals, at 91.9%. Their number increased by 97.7% compared with the previous year (INSTAT, 2022a, p. 15).

According to data collected by the Statistics Institute of Albania, there has been an increase in income generation from the tourism industry over the years. Additionally, there has been a rise in the number of accommodation facilities and a growth in the number of foreign tourists visiting Albania in recent years. As previously mentioned, the indicator for the “viability of the local tourism industry” is increasing.

Table 2. Accommodation Capacity in Albania during the years

Year	The number of accommodation enterprises	The Number of Rooms	The number of Beds
2016	1242	17.692	41.379
2018	1326	17.000	38.000
2020	1469	40.000	95.000
2021	1457	41.000	98.000
2022	1570	48.000	109.000

Source: INSTAT, 2019a, p. 20, 2022a, p. 19, 2022b, p. 21, 2023, p. 19

“**Support of local tourism destination**” indicator measures the ratio of the number of successful applications made in given year for business support divided by the total number of tourist services and transport services in the destination) * 100.

No statistical data are available on the number of tourism businesses that have benefited from financial or administrative support. Referring to the law on strategic investments, administrative support is given to the tourism sector by public administration regarding the coordination, supervision and representation of strategic investment (Albania Investment Council, 2018, pp. 11-14). Financial support in the tourism sector is in the form of:

- The reduction of value-added tax (VAT) from 20% to 6% only for the hotel accommodation service, is applied from June 2017.
- 6% VAT is applied for each service offered within the accommodation structures “Hotel / Resort with 5 * stars, special status”, in force since January 2018.
- Exemption from profit tax for 10 years for those accommodation structures that gain the special status Hotel / Resort with 5 * stars.
- Exemption from building tax for accommodation structures with 4 * and 5 * stars which have an internationally registered and recognized trademark.
- VAT reduction from 20% to 6% for “agro-tourism subject” accommodations, effective from January 2019.
- Profit tax decreased from 15% to 5%. applied from January 1, 2019, for “agro-tourism subject” taxpayers.
- Exemption from impact tax on infrastructure for “agro-tourism subject” investing in their activity. This measure started on 1 January 2019. *Based on these data, it results that the indicator “Support of local tourism destination” is growing.*

The indicator known as “*Destination’s marketing and promotion activities*” is evaluated by calculating the ratio of the total number of overnight stays in the destination to the marketing costs (EUR). This ratio represents the rate at which the number of overnight stays is achieved per euro invested in the marketing and promotion efforts of the destination.

According to the Institute of Statistics, the number of overnight stays by tourists is increasing from 2018-2022 (Table 3). But if we refer to the data of previous years regarding the marketing expenses in years regarding the promotion of the destination, they have been increasing (Table 3). If we calculate the ratio of overnight stays per year to annual marketing expenses, this rate is decreasing, which means that the number of nights tourists stay at the destination has increased as a result of the increase in marketing expenses of the industry, but the last one has recently increased by a larger percentage from year to year. National authorities when planning marketing expenditure, need to keep in mind that the percentage increase in marketing expenses from year to year should be less than the percentage increase in overnight stays of tourists in the destination.

Table 3. Marketing Expenditure and overnight stays in years

Years	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
(ALL) Marketing Expenditure (1)	103 ml	163.7 ml	264.6 ml	-	-	-	-	-
Overnight stay (2)	2.079 ml	2.896 ml	2.643 ml	3.07 ml	3.25 ml	1.61 ml	3.186 ml	3.83 ml
Rate 2/1	0.02	0.017	0.009	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2017, 2022; INSTAT, 2022d; National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism 2019-2023, 2019

Because the number of overnight stays per Euro invested in marketing and promotion of the destination is decreasing the indicator “*Destination’s marketing and promotion activities*” is in decline.

“*Quality of Welcome*” indicator measures the pressure of the tourist season at the destination or the seasonality of the destination. To assess the indicator of “*Quality of Welcome*” and the seasonality of the destination, it is important to gather data about the number of tourists visiting Albania every month, specifically focusing on recent years.

To assess the seasonality, we have taken into account the number of foreign tourists who come to visit the destination by purpose of travel in each month of the years 2019–2022. Referring to the data collected by the Institute of Statistics of Albania results that during June, July, August, and September 2019, the percentage of tourists frequenting this destination was 61.6%; in these months, the year 2020 is 57.7%; in the year 2021, seasonality is 66.6%; and in 2022, the percentage of tourists who frequent this destination is 63%, (INSTAT, 2022e). So, as can be seen from the statistics, seasonality is characteristic not only for Albania but also for the Vlora region. *If the destination is experiencing high seasonality, that could cause potential tensions between local people and tourists, and the indicator “Quality of Welcome” is in decline.*

“*Safety and security in destination*” indicator is measured by the ratio of criminal acts involving crime against the person concerning the number of local inhabitants. In the year 2022 (INSTAT, 2022g), are recorded in a total of 33,476 criminal offenses were 4.8 % less, compared to 2021 (Table 4). In 2022, there were 42 recorded criminal offences per 10,000 inhabitants, compared to 61 offenses in 2021, concerning the population.

Table 4. Recorded criminal offences

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Criminal Offences (Total)	34468	35210	32736	35175	33476
Per 10 thousand inhabitants	120.2	123.4	52	61	42

Source: INSTAT, 2022g

In 2022 13,650 injured persons were registered (INSTAT, 2022f), 19.3 % fewer persons, compared to the year 2021 (Table 5). Injured persons for crimes against a person account for 40.5 % of the total number of injured persons.

Table 5. Injured persons from crimes again the person

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Injured persons for crime against the person	7,007	6,744	6,928	6,411	5,522
Total number of injured persons	19,101	18,858	17,829	16,910	13,650

Source: INSTAT, 2022f

The decrease in the number of criminal acts per 10,000 inhabitants and the decrease in the number of injured persons for crimes against a person in recent years indicate an increase in the “Safety and security in destination” indicator.

“Quality of air in destination” indicator measures the number of days with high air pollution levels (Qualitest, 2003). Air quality monitoring in Albania is performed by the National Environment Agency which is the competent authority for drafting the Programme for National Environmental Monitoring and Monitoring of the State of the Environment. For urban air quality monitoring, standard methods have been implemented according to which time averages of air quality monitoring are determined based on the EU’s CAFE directive for clean air and the EEA’s reporting requirements. The assessment is carried out by comparing them with the limits according to the standards of the European Union (National Environment Agency, 2021, p 132).

One of the main indicators of urban air quality is PM10 (particular matter), which is the number of days that exceed the EU daily norm of 50 µg / m³ from the number of days allowed in a year, which is 35 days (National Environment Agency, 2021, p. 132). Referring to the air quality indicator PM10, we note that during the last few years, the number of days where the PM10 indicator exceeds the EU daily rates is 0 (Table 6).

Table 6. PM10 data for Vlora destination in Years.

Year	2021	2019	2017	2016
Nr. of days exceeded (50µg/m³) PM10	0	0	14	24
Number of days allowed / year	35	35	35	35

Source: National Environment Agency, 2019, p. 126

Based on the data collected by the institute statistics for Albania, National Environment Agency, the number of days with high levels of air pollution during the last years is decreasing, which means that the indicator “Quality of air in destination” is growing.

The **“Quality of local environmental”** indicator measures the ratio of litter gathered to the area of the destination. Based on data collected during the year 2021, 875,105 tons of urban waste were managed, a decrease of 17% compared to 2020. Referring to Table 7, the rate of urban waste managed is decreasing from year to year. The annual amount of urban waste managed

per capita on a national scale in 2021 was 311 kg per capita, up from 369 kg per capita in 2020 (INSTAT, 2021b, p. 1). A declining rate of urban waste management per inhabitant is observed.

The coverage level of the population with waste management services in 2021 was 88.8 %, marking an increase of 1.9 % compared to the previous year (Table 8). Although the amount of waste collected in 2021 is lower than in 2020, the number of people served with waste management services has increased.

Table 7. Urban-managed solid waste

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Tones	1,253,913	1,325,071	1,086,692	1,047,852	875,105
Total managed Kg/capita	436	462	381	369	311

Source: INSTAT, n.d.

Despite the data at the national level, at the local level, the amount of waste management has increased from year to year and the quality of the local environment has improved (Table 9). Based on the above data the indicator “Quality of local environment” is increasing.

Table 8. Population coverage rate with community waste services

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Coverage level with services %	68.9	65.7	87.9	86.9	88.8

Source: INSTAT, 2021b, p. 2

Table 9. The annual amount of municipal waste management in the Vlora Region during the years

Vlore Region	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
(in kg)	70,921,260	171,860,510	73,087,884	75,522,710	93,977,910

Source: National Environment Agency, 2021, p. 150

The “Pre-arrival communication” indicator measures tourist complaints registered per overnight stay. Currently, no database specifically focuses on collecting tourist complaints about the lack of communication and necessary information before reaching their destination. Referring to this indicator, the responsible authorities of the local destination management have to provide the necessary information regarding the satisfaction of the tourists with the communication before they arrive at the destination.

The “Accessibility indicator measures the percentage of tourist services suitable for and accessible by disabled people and people of limited mobility (Qualitest, 2003). The tourism accessibility indicator considers individuals with disabilities, including those with other functional, health, or mobility limitations, when providing tourism services. Generally, as Bowtell (2015) stated in his study, a small percentage of facilities are estimated to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. In addition, the Albania 2019 Report highlights the presence of significant challenges in addressing environmental and infrastructural barriers that hinder the mobility of individuals with disabilities. Despite the growing recognition of those with disabilities, a significant number of hotels, transportation facilities, and tourist destinations remain inaccessible to a considerable portion of the disabled population and elderly individuals. The availability of accessibility information for various locations and venues is limited. Mobility and freedom of movement for those with disabilities are hindered by various factors, including disorderly

traffic conditions, the absence of rail and elevator infrastructure in multi-story buildings, inadequately equipped buses, and a scarcity of wheelchairs or walking aids. In summary, disabled people have limited access to tourism services because the infrastructure is often inadequate and the staff is less experienced. The market needs destination facility modifications, credible internet information, and the necessary legislation to allow and encourage disabled tourists to travel like able-bodied tourists.

Referring to the “**Transport**” indicator measures the ratio of complaints on the reliability of public passenger transport in the destination (Qualitest, 2003). Generally, most tourists use the means of transport provided at the destination. The efficiency of the transport services encourages tourists to make more use of collective transport, thus presenting a potential solution for alleviating traffic congestion and improving environmental air quality. The assessment of this indicator can be conducted by quantifying the volume of complaints received from various channels on the quality of transportation services acquired by visitors. The Vloera Region currently lacks a designated office responsible for collecting complaints from foreign tourists regarding the reliability of public passenger transport services.

The “**Accommodation**” indicator quantifies the number of certified accommodation establishments in a destination that adheres to either a Quality Management System (QMS) or an Environmental Management System (EMS) standard or has been granted an Eco label (Qualitest, 2003). This indicator tracks the extent to which organizations have obtained certifications for Quality and Environmental Management Standards, as well as the utilization of eco-label programmes to enhance the quality of services provided to guests. The Eco Label is a voluntary label that is applicable across Europe and is used to identify products and services that demonstrate superior environmental performance compared to average products. In Albania, it operates the **Quality Certification Bureau (2023)** is an independent organization that provides third-party audit services, including technical inspections, audits, and certifications. It plays a crucial role in supporting business operators by offering training and assistance in obtaining certifications for various international standards such as ISO 9001, ISO 22000, ISO 14001, ISO 18001, and HACCP. Several companies engaged in the tourism industry have shown increased awareness of the importance of complying with these standards. On the other hand, *Albanian companies do not apply the Eco label to tourism hotels and campsites, and there aren't any tourism operator, accommodation facilities, or restaurants that has a certification of EMS or QMS (European Commission, 2022).*

The “**Information**” indicator is measured by the ratio of overnight stays in the destination divided by the number of visits to the TICs (Tourist Information Centre) in the destination (Qualitest, 2003). Based on the statistical data provided by INSTAT in 2022, there has been a notable rise in the numbers of tourists visiting Albania, accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of Tourist Information Centers (TICs). These information centers are strategically dispersed over the Vloera region to cover an extensive variety of information. Some of the tourism information centers in the Vloera Region are Info Point Vlore established in 2017, Karaburun-Sazan Marine Park Visitor Centre (2017), Tourist Information Office (2018), and Llogara National Park Information Centre (January 2019). The tourist information centers play a crucial role in improving the overall experience of tourists by providing reliable resources about the destination. Moreover, the collaboration between the business community and the public sector serves to further enhance the value of the tourist information center to the local community. These centers offer a friendly and welcoming environment for tourists seeking information

about the various tourism products and services offered in the Vlora region. *Often, tour operators and other entities in the tourism industry communicate directly with foreign tourists; sometimes visits to TICs have been skipped. For this reason, it is difficult to measure the information indicator exactly according to the aforementioned formula.*

“Eating and drinking” indicator evaluation. “Food and drinks” are another important variable in order to promote the traditional local cuisine. Referring to the management of tourist destinations, this indicator measures tourist satisfaction with the quality of places to eat and drink in the destination. It can be related to the service’s quality, the value for money, or the quality of the products. This indicator can be measured by the number of complaints concerning eating and drinking establishments in the destination or the number of overnight stays (100 000) (Qualitest, 2003). Measuring this criterion requires a central point where tourists can file complaints about the quality of the eating and drinking establishments in the destination. Due to the lack of this central point, we are unable to calculate this indicator.

“Activities” indicator evaluates the level of satisfaction among tourists regarding the variety and quality of activities available at the destination. Even though the perceptions and desires of the tourists about the activities are very different, the destination manager has to be aware of tourist activities. This indicator is determined by the availability of commercial tourist attractions, sporting and recreational activities, and cultural and sporting events within a half-day’s travel (Qualitest, 2003). To measure the quality of the tourism destination management, it is necessary to maintain an inventory of the commercial tourist attractions, sporting and recreational activities, and cultural and sporting events that can be reached within a half-days travel. Generally, the Vlora Municipality has made significant improvements in terms of cultural events and recreational activities. Several activities have become traditions in Vlora as well as the celebration of special days that align with the characteristics of the region. Vlora is one of the most important tourist centers in our country, with a large number of cultural and natural attractions, archaeological sites and monuments that represent different periods of Vlora’s history and cultural heritage.

The “Bathing water quality” indicator evaluates tourists’ satisfaction with the cleanliness of bathing areas. This index relates to bathing areas in the destination that do not meet the required water quality standards outlined in the European Union Bathing Water Directive (Qualitest, 2003). The level of compliance of a destination with the mandatory values of the EU Bathing Water Quality Directive can be assessed by calculating the ratio of incompatible sampling points to the total number of sampling points in that destination. According to the statistics, Albania had 92 water bathing sites in 2016 and 119 in 2023. Table 10 shows the statistics according to the country report “Albanian bathing water quality” on the total number of bathing waters categorized by quality class over the assessment period covering 2016 to 2022. Out of the 38 bathing places in the Vlora Region Destination, only three establishments meet the poor quality standard.

As we can see, during the period from 2020 to 2022, there has been an observed increase in the number of beaches with good quality, while the number of beaches with high quality has decreased. It is important to note that the number of coastal sites with poor or unclassified beaches has been minimized due to the significant attention and prioritization of beach management and utilization. The evaluation of coastal bathing water in Vlora shows that the number of high-quality sites has increased and the number of sites of poor and sufficient quality in this destination has decreased. Summarizing all, the percentage of bathing areas in the destination not complying with mandatory values in the EU Bathing Water Directive is reduced.

Table 10. The quality of bathing water in Albania

	Total count of bathing waters	Excellent		Good		Sufficient		Poor		Not classified	
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
2018	108	67	62.0	20	18.5	5	4.6	10	9.3	6	5.6
2019	119	70	58.8	26	21.8	5	4.2	7	5.9	11	9.2
2020	119	91	76.5	23	19.3	5	4.2	-	-	-	-
2021	119	81	68.1	30	25.2	8	6.7	-	-	-	-
2022	119	80	67.2	31	26.1	8	6.7	-	-	-	-
Vlora Region	38	35	92.1	-	-	-	-	3	7.9	-	-

Source: EEA, 2022

“Parks and gardens” indicator has a significant influence on our well-being and emotions. Some destinations provide green areas, which can have a significant impact on the planning, design, and management of these spaces. The evaluation of this index can be measured as the percentage of tourists who choose to visit parks and gardens as their main reason for their visits and/or holidays, divided by the total number of visitors to the destination (Qualitest, 2003). Meanwhile, it is evident that parks and gardens are highly regarded as attractive destinations, but there is a lack of statistical data regarding the number of visitors to them.

“Value for money” indicator measures the percentage of return tourists that physically return to the destination (Qualitest, 2003).

Despite efforts to explore new markets beyond the continent, Albania remains highly dependent on European visitors. Thus, in 2022, 91.7% of tourists who visited Albania were from the European region, compared with the year 2021 that was 90.9%, with an increase of 25.3% compared to a year ago (INSTAT, 2022b, p. 15).

Table 11. Arrivals of foreign citizens according to regions, 2017-2022

Description	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	5,117,700	5,926,803	6,406,038	2,657,818	5,688,649	7,543,817
I Africa	2,080	3,457	21,645	1,650	3,157	4,614
II America	123,729	148,845	153,579	30,020	115,833	177,419
III. East Asia and Pacific	53,533	68,121	66,757	5,033	8,425	26,840
IV. Middle East	4,722	7,174	11,005	1,813	36,959	41,862
V. South Asia	2,216	3,115	3,167	801	21,001	10,908
VI. Europe	4,686,695	5,331,614	5,774,226	2,616,908	5,172,845	6,921,733
VII Other countries not specified	244,725	364,477	375,659	1,593	330,429	360,441

Source: INSTAT, 2022e

As we noticed from the data of the Institute of Statistics for Albania (Table 11), the percentage of foreign tourists coming to Albania from the same regions has increased from year to year (Institute of Statistics of Albania, Arrivals of foreign citizens according to regions, 2017–2022), except for 2020 where we have a decrease in the number of tourists coming due to the COVID situation. As the percentage of tourists that come from the same regions has increased in recent years, this shows that the indicator is increasing and tourists are getting more value for the price they pay. Table 12 is a summary of the evaluation of the performance quality indicators of a tourist destination.

Table 12. Evaluated indicators assessing the quality performance of the destination

<i>Please indicate the level of growth/decline for each indicator.</i>		In decline	Growing	Unchanged	Not applicable
Nr	Indicators of quality destination evaluation				
1	“Viability of local tourism industry”- Percentage growth of the tourism industry in the destination.		X		
2	“Support of local tourism destination”- Rate of successful business support applications made by the local tourism industry.		X		
3	“Destination’s marketing and promotion activities” - Number of overnight stays per Euro invested in marketing and promotion of the destination. The higher the ratio the better.	X			
4	“Quality of Welcome” - The pressure of the tourist season at the destination. Seasonality of the destination.	X			
5	“Safety and security in destination” - Ratio of criminal acts involving crime against the person in relation to number of local inhabitants.		X		
6	“Quality of air in destination” - Number of days with high air pollution levels tells us that quality of air is in decline.		X		
7	“Quality of local environment” - Ratio of litter gathered to the area of the destination.		X		
Nr	Indicators of tourist product quality evaluation				
8	“Pre-arrival communication” - Tourist complaints registered per overnight stay. (Complaints about the communication the tourists receive before arriving at the destination)				X
9	“Accessibility” - Percentage of tourist services suitable for, and accessible by, disabled people and people of limited mobility. (The level of accessibility of tourist services in the destination, where tourist services are: (i) information and visitor care, (ii) accommodation and catering, (iii) commercial tourist attractions, events and combined products, (iv) sporting and recreational activities.				X
10	“Transport” - Ratio of complaints on the reliability of public passenger transport in the destination.				X
11	“Accommodation” - Number of accommodation establishments in the destination certified according to either a QMS (Quality Management System) or an EMS (Environmental Management System) standard or awarded an Eco label.				X
12	“Information” - Number of overnight stays per visit to the TICs (Tourist Information Center) in the destination. (Measures the frequency of visits to the TICs in the destination and their success in attracting visitors).		X		
13	“Eating and drinking” - Number of complaints concerning quality of places to eat and drink in the destination per overnight stay. (Measures the number of complaints registered concerning the quality of the eating and drinking establishments in the destination)				X
14	“Activities” - Number of things to and places to visit within a ½ day’s travel of the destination per overnight stay. (Measure the supply of tourist activities in the destination).		X		
15	“Bathing water quality” - Percentage of bathing areas in the destination not complying with mandatory values in the EU Bathing Water Directive	X			
16	“Parks and gardens” - Percentage of tourists where the main reason to visit the destination are Parks and gardens.		X		
17	“Value for money” - Percentage of returned tourists (Indicates the number of tourists that physically return to the destination)		X		

Source: Own calculation

Referring to the secondary data collected for each indicator, it shows that 52% of the performance quality indicators of a destination are increasing, 17.6% are decreasing and 29.4% are in-applicable, which means there is a lack of statistical data on the evaluation of these indicators.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the performance of the authorities responsible for the management of the tourist destination regarding the indicators of the quality of the performance of a destination. The evaluation of the performance of a tourist destination does not only aim to identify problems but aims to identify the indicators of which destination performs well and take measures to maintain and improve the performance of each indicator of a tourist destination. The provision of information for each indicator is based on secondary data and only for 69.4% of the indicators are statistical data. A limitation of the study remains the lack of statistical data for 29.4% of the indicators which can be evaluated by referring to the primary data, but again they show the current situation and not the trend in time.

This study is a very good opportunity to help the authorities responsible for the management of the tourist destination on the evaluation of the trend of the performance evaluation indicators of the tourist destinations as well as taking measures for their improvement referring to the design and implementation of appropriate strategies. Existing and potential tourism businesses benefit in the form of their orientation towards improving the quality indicators of a destination with a focus on the development of sustainable tourism.

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