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### Behavior-Based Segmentation in Tourism: A Study on Visitor Profiles and Preferences – Albanian Case

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This study aims to analyze the preferences and behaviors of tourists visiting Albania, based on their demographic profile and preferences for natural, cultural, and coastal destinations. Using analysis of variance (ANOVA), the study identifies the main factors that influence tourists' destination choices. Furthermore, the study highlights significant differences in perceptions of service quality among different tourist segments. The results indicate that tourists visiting Albania exhibit varying preferences based on their demographic characteristics and the purpose of their visit. For example, employed tourists tend to choose natural and coastal destinations more frequently, while cultural tourists have higher expectations for the quality of services offered in cultural destinations. Meanwhile, domestic tourists prefer coastal tourism more than foreign tourists. Based on the data analysis, it is recommended to improve infrastructure and facilities for children, telecommunications, and the quality of services in the main destinations. Furthermore, it is suggested that the policy should aim at developing sustainable tourism to attract more international tourists. This study provides practical recommendations for improving the tourism sector in Albania and adapting tourist offers in accordance with the needs and expectations of different tourist segments.

**Keywords:** Albanian tourism; tourist segmentation; tourist behaviors; natural tourism; cultural tourism; coastal tourism; ANOVA analysis; sustainable tourism

#### 1. Introduction

Tourism has been considered the largest contributor to prosperity and employment in the world. This industry is important in the world economy due to its potential and size (Hunter, 1997). It contributes to poverty reduction in some traditional communities (Croes, 2014), creating different jobs than traditional subsistence (World Tourism Organization, 2002), as well as promoting and selling local area products (Lee, 2013; Lepp, 2007). Also, tourism has had and would have the main role in saving and improving the natural and cultural heritage of different states and regions (Hunter, 1995). (Zhubi et al., 2024) indicates that tourism is a global economic phenomenon, one of the industries that contributes

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considerably to economic growth and the development of the world economy, generating income, new jobs, and influencing the creation of international relations.

Tourism plays an important role in the economic development of many countries, including Albania. With beautiful natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and a beautiful coastline, Albania is emerging as an attractive destination for tourists from all over the world. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (2024), Albania recorded 11.7 million foreign visitors during 2024, an increase of 15.2% compared to the previous year.

However, to maximize its tourism potential and improve the visitor experience, it is essential to understand the behaviors and preferences of tourists. Behavioral segmentation in tourism offers an advanced approach to classifying tourists into different groups according to their actions, preferences, and motivations. As Kara et al (2021) point out, behavior-based segmentation is more effective than traditional demographic methods for identifying niche markets and tailoring services. This process allows tourism service providers to tailor their offerings and create more personalized experiences for visitors. According to a recent report by Euromonitor (2023), segmenting tourists into distinct categories such as “Eco Adventurers” and “Cultural Explorers” has become increasingly important in a post-pandemic world, where tourists are seeking authentic and personalized experiences.

One important category is coastal tourism, which is one of the most popular forms of travel in the world. Coastal tourists seek relaxation, beaches, and a variety of water-based activities, and they are often willing to spend more on experiences related to the nature and scenic beauty of the Albanian coast (Holloway, 2004). Another one is “mixed” tourism, where tourists seek a combination of different experiences in a single trip. According to recent studies by Li, Robinson, and Oriade (2021), tourists are increasingly inclined to seek mixed offers, combining different experiences to maximize their satisfaction during the trip. Despite the body of literature focusing on various aspects of tourist behaviour in Albania (Karaj, 2021), our research is the first that use this behaviour taxonomy, i.e., destination preferences.

The primary objective of this paper is to analyse the preferences and behaviours of tourists visiting Albania by applying behavioural segmentation to identify different visitor profiles based on demographic variables and destination preferences (natural, cultural, coastal, and mixed). Specifically, the paper aims to identify the main factors influencing tourists’ destination choices in Albania; explore how demographic characteristics such as employment, age, and nationality affect preferences for different types of tourism; examine differences in service satisfaction among tourist segments; Provide policy recommendations and practical implications for tourism service providers and policymakers for more tailored and sustainable tourism development. Moreover, the growing role of digital marketing and personalization in this context cannot be ignored. Marketing strategies based on behavioral insights are becoming increasingly effective in increasing customer engagement and loyalty (Gravitate, 2023). This shift from a traditional marketing approach to a more personalized approach through behavioral segmentation is expected to bring a significant improvement in the effectiveness of tourism promotion in Albania.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. In the second section, we focus on the Albanian context, addressing economic importance and challenges. The third section shows a literature review about behavioral segmentation. Methodology is analysed in the fourth section, followed by another section of results, concluding with the last section on implications and limitations.

## 2. Context of Albania

### 2.1. Economic Importance

The tourism in Albania has undergone significant developments in recent years, being considered one of the fastest-growing destinations in Europe. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2023), the tourism sector has been calculated for 7.6% of global GDP in 2022, 22% more than the previous year. Also, in 2022, the tourism industry contributed to 22 million new jobs, 7,9% more than 2021. So, in this way, this industry is positive despite it faces with challenges, such as the digital and green transition, which require rethinking the tourism sector's development (OECD, 2020). In These years, Albania has been considered by many tourists as an important tourism destination, achieving 6,7 million tourists visiting the country in 2022, 22% more than the previous year. Also, statistics of UNWTO (2022) show that this kind of sector accounts for 35,1% of total exports, with 3 billion \$ in international tourism receipts and 1,9 billion \$ in international tourism expenditure.

### 2.2 Tourism Profile

Albania offers a wide range of attractions that attract tourists from all over the world. Some of the most popular destinations include:

*Albanian Riviera:* One of the most beautiful coastlines in the Mediterranean, with beautiful beaches and crystal waters, such as Saranda, Dhërmi, and Jale. These areas are increasingly popular with tourists seeking relaxation and water activities.

*Historic cities:* Cities like Gjirokastra and Berat, which have been declared World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), offer a rich insight into Albanian culture and history. These cities are known for their unique architecture, forts, and museums that contain a rich history.

*Natural landscapes:* Albania is known for its magnificent natural landscapes, such as Dajti National Park, Lake Shkodra, and the Albanian Alps. These areas offer opportunities for hiking, mountaineering, and other outdoor activities, attracting adventurous tourists.

The request for sand and sun tourism is higher than other tourism types. The southern part of Albania attracts more than 45% of the arrivals, with coastal tourism accounting for 60% of the destinations visited (INSTAT, 2020). On the other hand, there are also positive trends for other types of tourism. So, data from the National Agency of Protected Areas shows that in 2021, 4,648,736 foreign and domestic tourists visited our protected areas, which is 8% more than the previous year. Also, in 2022, the protected areas of Elbasan and Shkodra had the highest number of visitors, followed by Fier, Durrës, and Kukës.

### 2.3. Main Challenges

One of the main challenges for the tourism industry is sustainable development. The growing interest in “green tourism” and environmentally conscious travelers presents both opportunities and challenges for destinations like Albania. Tourists who are interested in eco-tourism are inclined to support initiatives that promote sustainability and environmental conservation (Zemla, 2020).

According to UNDP (2022) main challenges identified are labour shortages, industry's vulnerability to global crises such as pandemics and wars, informality in the sector, and lack of infrastructure. Also, there are some other challenges as the digital and green transition, that need to be rethought in the

tourism sector's development (OECD, 2020). Further, other challenges identified by the National Tourism Strategy 2019-2023 are a lack of water, road, and power grid infrastructure, and a lack of accommodation services, obstructing the sustainable development of tourism. The authors (Gerdoçi & Shkreta, 2024) highlight that tourism seasonality is a significant challenge for service providers in the NEAT (Nature, Eco-and Adventure Tourism) sector.

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1. Theoretical Framework of Behavioral Segmentation**

Behavioral segmentation in tourism has become an essential tool for understanding how tourists can be classified based on their preferences, behaviors, and motivations. Segmentation provides effective marketing strategies and the creation of products and services that enable the fulfillment of the specific requirements of different visitors to tourist destinations.

In this way, this type of segmentation divides the market not only based on demographic characteristics, but also based on what motivates travelers, their behavior during travel, and the types of experiences they seek. As suggested by Lee and Kim (2023) in their study about wellness tourism shows that tourists have different motivations for this kind of tourism, and using the dissimilar tourist motivations as the main criteria for market segmentation, they find differences in behavioral characteristics between groups.

To provide a satisfying experience for visitors, it is essential to understand how perceptions of service quality vary between different tourist segments. This helps in building personalized offers and increasing overall tourist satisfaction (Gretzel et al., 2015).

The concept of behavioral segmentation is based on psychological theories that include consumer behavior, decision-making, and motivation.

An important theory in this field is Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which Pearce (1988) has applied to tourism. Pearce (1988) has applied this theory to tourism, arguing that tourists' motivations evolve as they gain travel experience. According to Pearce's Travel Career Ladder, tourists' motivations evolve as they gain more travel experience, ranging from basic needs such as relaxation and security to more sophisticated needs such as self-actualization and cultural exploration.

There are also attitude theories studying human behaviour, and one of them is the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), dating in the mid-1960s (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). An individual's intention to behave is a function of the attitude toward the behavior (attitude toward behavior) and the social pressures to perform the behavior in question to which the person is subject (subjective norm). On the other hand, Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p. 192) criticized that theory because the behavior of a person may also be caused by that person's attitude toward the entities to which the behavior is directed. Furthermore, authors (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980, p. 150) also highlight that attributes of a product are judged by clients based on their evaluative criteria, which results in the creation of an attitude toward the attributes of a product that, in the end, influences consumer intention and purchase behavior.

Another useful theory in tourism is the "theory of tourism motivation," which explains why and where clients travel (Dann, 1981). There are two types of factors in this theory: internal factors called "push" factors (psychological factors) and external factors called "pull" factors can be generated by an external force such as a tourist destination attribute (Yoo et al., 2015). A study (Cha, Jo, Lee, & Hyun, 2024) into the three biggest markets: Chinese, Japanese, and American, using this theory, results in a market

segmentation into three main segments: the quality seeker, the essential services seeker, and the rest seeker.

The study of Brochado, Cristovão Veríssimo & Oliveira, 2022, using an online survey with a sample of 1003 Portuguese tourists, highlights demographic market segments' effect on the relationships between memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), perceived value dimensions, and behavioral intentions, resulting in confirming heterogeneity among them.

Another study by authors (Lo & Qu, 2014) using a survey of 778 Chinese tourists to Hong Kong and including the theory of reasoned action (TRA), found that product quality has a direct influence on behavioural intention, and staff also have a direct influence on overall satisfaction.

Also, Crompton (1979) identified nine factors that influence holiday making, including the need to escape, explore, and socialize.

These factors have contributed to various studies on tourism segmentation. These motivations are essential for understanding why tourists choose specific destinations or activities. In tourism, this type of segmentation goes beyond reasons for travel and includes behavioral measures, such as how often people travel, days of stay, spending habits, and preferred activities (Dolnicar, 2008). These behavioral aspects allow for the creation of distinct tourist segments, increasing the capacity for targeted marketing strategies.

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of behavioral segmentation, noting that it allows for more targeted marketing strategies and improved customer satisfaction (Dolnicar, 2002). For example, tourists who engage in cultural activities may be more interested in educational tours, while beach vacationers may focus more on recreation and relaxation. By segmenting tourists based on their behaviors, destinations can create more personalized experiences, thereby increasing their appeal and competitiveness in the global tourism market.

The study of authors (McKercher, Tolkach, Eka Mahadewi & Byomantara, 2022) tested different segmentation techniques to show which one is the best to differentiate tourist behaviour in Bali, Indonesia. Five different segmentation techniques were studied including two first methods, geographic and demographic, two a second methods, behavioural and motivation, and the fifth technique involving a hybrid approach applying geographic, demographic, and behavioural variables, resulting in the conclusion that geographic segmentation proved to be the most efficacious, with motivation segmentation least reliable.

### **3.2. Tourist Categories Based on Behavioral Segmentation**

The concept of behavioral segmentation has been applied to different dimensions of tourist behavior, including spending patterns, travel motivations, and participation in activities. Studies have shown that tourists can be grouped into different behavioral segments based on their engagement in activities such as nature exploration, cultural visits, shopping, and beach relaxation (Bieger & Laesser, 2002). These activities often correspond to specific tourist profiles. Based on this literature, some examples of categories of tourists based on behavioral preferences are:

- *Nature Tourism*: Tourists in this category seek destinations with natural features, including mountains, forests, and national parks. Fennell (2014) defines nature-based tourism as activities that rely on the natural environment, with a focus on environmental protection and sustainability. These tourists often prioritize ecological experiences and are more concerned about the environmental impact of tourism.

- *Cultural Tourism*: Richards (2001) considers cultural tourism as a form of travel where the main purpose is to explore the culture, heritage, art, and traditional practices of a particular destination. Cultural tourists are interested in museums, historical sites, local festivals, and authentic cultural experiences. Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006) further explored cultural tourism through emotional connections and personal identity.
- *Coastal Tourism*: Coastal tourism is one of the most popular forms of travel in the world and usually attracts tourists seeking relaxation, sunbathing, and recreational activities near the water (Holloway, 2004). Coastal tourists often seek to escape from their daily routine, preferring destinations that offer leisure, convenience, and scenic beauty.
- *Mixed Tourism*: Some tourists have preferences that include more than one of the above categories. Recent studies by Li, Robinson, and Oriade (2021) show that tourists are increasingly inclined to a combination of different experiences in a single trip, combining relaxation with exploration of local culture or nature.

A large literature supports the idea that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, employment status, and cultural background influence tourists' behaviors and preferences (Dwyer, 2004). For example, younger tourists may prefer adventure activities, while older tourists tend to seek cultural and relaxation trips (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). On the other hand, analysis of behaviors by geographic location often reveals that tourists from different countries have different preferences for nature or cultural destinations (Pizam & Sussmann, 1995).

The segmentation of Albanian tourists into nature, culture, beach, and mixed categories is consistent with broader tourism studies, providing specific insights into Albania's geographical and cultural diversity. Recent studies on Albanian tourism (Doka, 2021; Xhillari & Gjika, 2022) highlight the growing interest in nature-based tourism, especially in regions such as Thethi and Valbona, which offer mountainous landscapes and hiking trails. Cultural tourism has also seen growth, especially in historic cities such as Berat and Gjirokastrë, both of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

### 3.3. Differences in Service Evaluation between Different Tourism Categories

Nature tourists may have different expectations for services than cultural or beach tourists. For example, nature tourists often seek simple accommodations, perhaps even camping, and value access to nature more than luxury. On the other hand, beach tourists often prefer luxury hotels and resorts with high-end services (Cohen & Cohen, 2019).

In a study on tourism in Albania, it was found that cultural tourists often have high demands for tourist guides and information on historical sites, while beach tourists are more focused on relaxation and entertainment services (Karaj, 2021).

### 3.4 Tourist Satisfaction and Behavioral Segmentation

Tourist satisfaction is closely linked to the effectiveness of behavioral segmentation. Several studies have shown that tourists who feel that their needs and preferences are met are more likely to return to the destination and recommend it to others. For example, Alegre and Garau (2010) found that satisfaction levels varied significantly across behavioral segments. High spenders, in particular, had higher expectations regarding the quality of services, accommodation, and dining experiences. Failure to meet these expectations often resulted in lower levels of satisfaction and a reduced likelihood of repeat

visits. This highlights the importance of using behavioral segmentation to identify key service problems and develop targeted strategies to address them.

## **4. Methodology**

This paper aimed to analyze in depth the preferences of tourists for two different types of tourist destinations, namely natural, cultural, coastal, and mixed. With a particular focus on characterizing the relative preferences between these categories, the paper also aimed to identify the main factors that helped shape tourists' choices, thus providing valuable insight into what could be offered in these destinations and how they could be improved to meet the needs and expectations of visitors.

To carry out a comprehensive analysis, the division of tourist categories was structured in such a way as to reflect the diversity of offers and activities available to tourists. The categories included are natural, cultural, beach, and mixed. Data were collected through an accidental sampling method, where tourists were surveyed in popular locations during the summer months (June–August). While this approach allowed for efficient data gathering, it presents limitations such as limited representativeness and seasonal bias, as preferences may differ in off-peak periods. These factors are acknowledged as constraints in interpreting the broader applicability of the findings.

### **4.1. Data Collection**

Quantitative data were collected through field interviews in 12 selected tourist areas, involving a total of 1,228 respondents. The interviews were conducted in the following areas: Sarandë – Promenade; Gjirokastër – Castle; Berat – Castle; Përmet – City Center; Bënjë – Thermal Waters; Zvërnec – Church Entrance; Ksamil; Orik – Ancient City; Porto Palermo; Syri i Kaltër – Spring; Borsh. In each of these areas, 100 interviews were conducted by field interviewers. These data were provided by ACER within the framework of the project “For Integrated Urban Development and Tourism (PIUTD).

### **4.2. Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed through SPSS software, applying the Chi Square and ANOVA methods to verify the differences in tourists' perceptions regarding their preferences for natural and cultural destinations. This process allowed for the identification of statistically significant differences between different groups of tourists and their preferences for different categories of activities. The results of the analysis were interpreted to identify tourists' preferences and to highlight the factors that influenced their choices. This helped in providing recommendations for improving the tourist offers in these categories, focusing on aspects such as the quality of services, promotion of activities, and development of infrastructure.

## **5. Results**

### **5.1. Demographic Profile**

Demographic profiling of tourists is a key component for understanding tourism dynamics, providing an overview of visitor characteristics such as age, gender, employment status, and geographical location.

The data in the table below shows the distribution of tourists in the 12 tourist areas studied, reflecting trends for each category. For natural areas, Blue Eye stands out as the most preferred destination with 9.9%, reflecting visitors' high appreciation for the unique natural beauty of this area. In contrast, Zvërneci-Church Entrance has the lowest percentage, 4.0%.

Regarding cultural tourism, Gjirokastra-Castle takes the lead with 12.1%, confirming the importance of Gjirokastra's cultural and historical heritage for visitors seeking rich cultural experiences. Meanwhile, Blue Eye has the lowest percentage in this category, 4.2%, proving that this destination attracts more for its nature than its cultural value.

In the beach tourism category, Ksamil leads with 10.6%, an indicator of the area's attractiveness for those seeking coastal holidays. In contrast, the Përmet area, with only 4.0%, shows minimal interest in coastal tourism, as tourists there tend to be more oriented towards natural and cultural activities.

In the mixed category, which combines different tourist experiences, Porto Palermo-Castle has the highest percentage. This suggests that for tourists seeking a combination of cultural and natural experiences, Porto Palermo is a preferred destination. Meanwhile, Blue Eye has the lowest percentage in this category, 7.2%, reinforcing its perception as mainly a natural destination.

**Table 1. Distribution of tourists in the areas studied**

Tourist Area	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix	Total
Saranda- Promenade area	7.1%	6.3%	10.4%	7.5%	8.2%
Gjirokastrë- Castle	8.1%	12.1%	6.9%	8.5%	9.4%
Berat- Castle	7.8%	9.4%	6.8%	8.2%	8.1%
Përmet- Main Square	9.7%	9.4%	4.0%	8.7%	8.1%
Bënjë- Thermal Waters	9.6%	9.8%	6.9%	8.9%	8.1%
Porto Palermo- Castle	9.5%	10.3%	9.8%	9.4%	8.3%
Zvërnec- Church Entrance	4.0%	11.0%	7.3%	7.7%	8.5%
Orisk-Old city	9.5%	9.6%	10.2%	9.3%	8.1%
Blue Eye	9.9%	4.2%	6.4%	7.2%	8.2%
Ksamil	8.4%		10.6%	8.7%	8.3%
		8.5%			
Orikum	8.2%	5.2%	10.0%	7.9%	8.1%
Borsh	8.1%	4.1%	10.5%	7.9%	8.3%

*Source: Prepared by the author, 2025*

The following table presents data on demographic aspects, including gender, age group, residency status, and employment status of tourists who visited Albania during 2024, segmenting tourists according to their preferences for visiting attractions: natural, cultural, beach, and mixed. Analyzing these aspects provides information on the preferences and behaviors of different groups of tourists.

#### *Gender Distribution*

The gender distribution among different tourist profiles is relatively balanced. Men constitute a slight majority in all categories, with percentages ranging from 50.2% of Nature tourists to 52.7% of Cultural tourists. On the contrary, women constitute between 47.3% and 49.8% across profiles. This balance suggests that both genders similarly engage in tourism activities; however, men have a slightly higher representation, especially in cultural tourism.

#### *Distribution by age group*



The distribution by age group shows clear trends among tourist categories. The 26–35 age group is the most represented, especially among beach tourists (39.2%), reflecting a preference for relaxation among young adults. The 18–25 group also shows strong participation in beach tourism (11.6%), indicating growing interest from younger visitors. Older age groups, particularly those aged 56–65 and 65+, are less represented, with the 65+ group comprising only 3.0% of beach tourists. These trends highlight an opportunity to attract more young tourists through tailored experiences that match their interests.

#### *Resident status*

Regarding resident status, Albanian tourists constitute the majority in all categories, with 58.1% of tourists focused more on frequenting beaches. This high percentage emphasizes the importance of domestic tourism, which should be taken into account in marketing strategies that also serve the local market. While foreign tourists have the highest percentage in the nature tourism category, with 46.9%.

#### *Employment status*

From the data on the employment status of tourists, it results that the majority are employed, where tourists have the highest representation in the nature tourism category, with 73.3% and 70.8% of coastal tourism. This trend is essential for understanding the spending capacity of different tourism categories, as employed individuals may have more disposable income to allocate to tourism-related expenses.

As for tourists representing students, it turns out to have a low percentage in all categories, but with a higher percentage in beach attendance, with 8.1%. Regarding the unemployment rate among tourists, it is low, suggesting that those who travel to Albania are generally in stable financial situations.

**Table 2. Distribution of tourists by demographic aspects**

Demographics/Tourist Category		Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
Gender	Female	49,8%	47,3%	49,1%	48,6%
	Male	50,2%	52,7%	50,9%	51,4%
Age group	18-25 years	9,7%	10,4%	11,6%	10,1%
	26-35 years	37,0%	35,4%	39,2%	36,7%
	36-45 years	23,0%	24,4%	23,9%	24,0%
	46-55 years	16,4%	16,0%	15,0%	16,0%
	56-65 years	9,1%	9,4%	7,2%	9,1%
	65+	4,8%	4,4%	3,0%	4,2%
Resident status	Albanian	53,1%	53,3%	58,1%	54,6%
	Foreign	46,9%	46,7%	41,9%	45,4%
Employment status	Student	6,4%	7,4%	8,1%	7,0%
	Employed	73,3%	70,6%	70,8%	72,0%
	Self-employed	11,9%	12,7%	13,3%	12,4%
	Pensioner	5,0%	4,7%	3,7%	4,6%
	Non employed	3,4%	4,6%	4,1%	4,1%

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The data presented in the table describes the days of stay of tourists in Albania. Tourists who stay only 1-3 days constitute a small percentage of the total tourists in all four categories. These percentages range from 2.0% for beach tourists to 4.1% for the cultural tourism category. A larger percentage of tourists

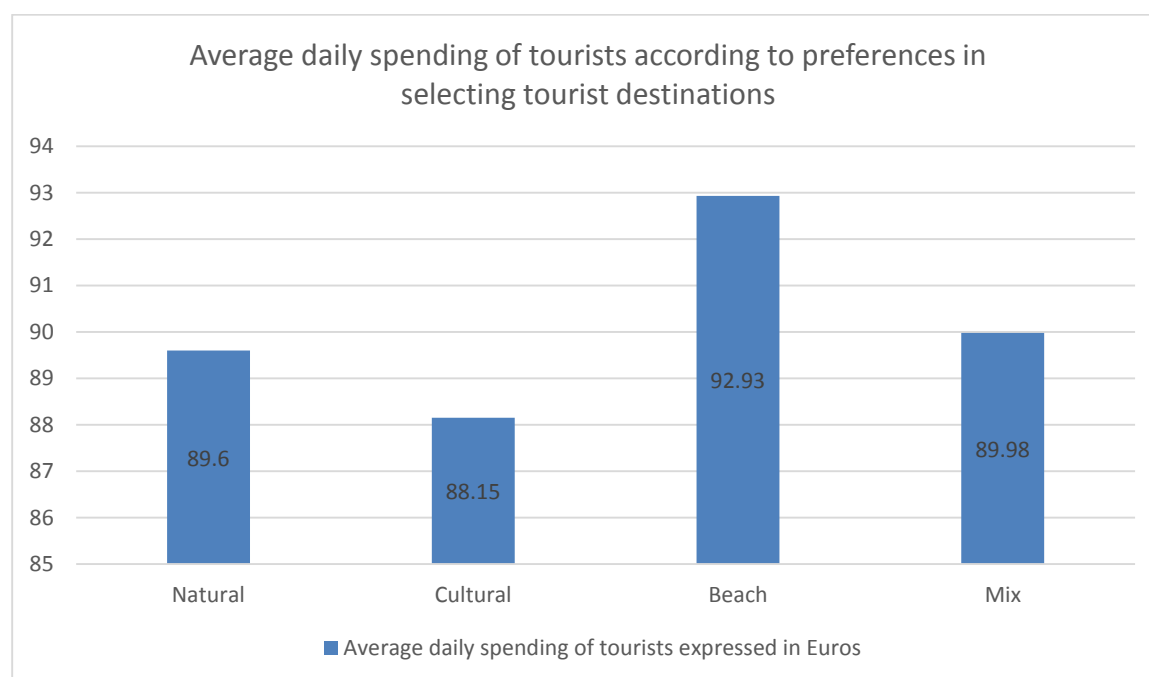
(36.4% to 38.8%) stay for an average period of 4-7 days. A large majority of tourists (percentages range from 59.2% to 60.3%) stay for more than 8 days.

**Table 3. Breakdown of tourists based on days of stay**

Days of stay	Tourist category			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
1-3 days	3.1%	4.1%	2.0%	3.1%
4-7 days	36.6%	36.4%	38.8%	36.7%
More than 8 days	60.3%	59.5%	59.2%	60.2%

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

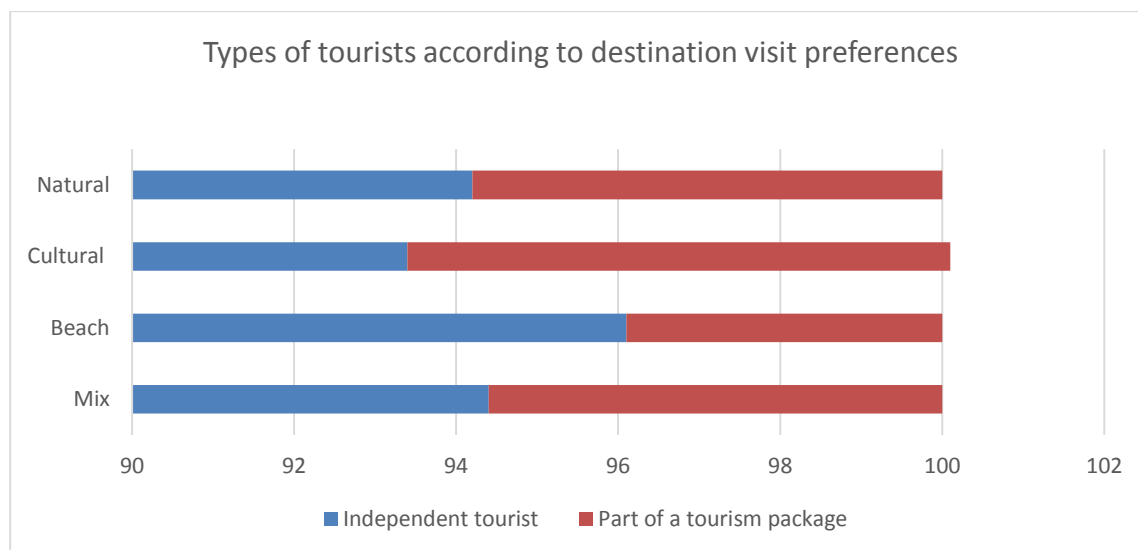
The graph below shows the average daily spending of tourists in Albania, divided by preferences for types of tourism. Tourists who prefer coastal tourism have the highest spending, with an average figure of 92.93 Euros. Tourists who follow nature tourism spend an average of 89.6 Euros per day. The assessment for cultural tourists is lower, with an average daily spending of 88.15 Euros. Tourists who follow a combination of activities have an average daily spending of 89.98 Euros, which shows a balanced approach between spending on nature, cultural, and combined tourism.



**Chart 1. Average daily spending of tourists according to preferences in selecting tourist destinations**

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The graph below shows the percentage of tourists traveling independently versus as part of a tourist package across four tourism types: natural, cultural, coastal, and mixed. Independent travel dominates in all categories. Beach tourism has the highest share of independent tourists (96.1%), followed by mixed (94.4%), natural (94.2%), and cultural tourism (93.4%). Package tourism remains low across the board, with cultural tourists having the highest share at just 6.7%.



**Chart 2. Types of tourists according to destination visit preferences**

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

## 5.2. Chi-Square Analysis for Demographic Data

In this session, the results of the Chi-Square analysis on demographic data of tourists visiting Albania will be examined to identify the relationships between different variables, such as gender, employment status, resident status, and education level, with preferences for different types of tourism.

**Table 4. Results from chi-square analysis for demographic data**

	Natural		Cultural		Beach		Mix	
	Pearson (X <sup>2</sup> )	p-value	Pearson (X <sup>2</sup> )	p-value	Pearson (X <sup>2</sup> )	p-value	Pearson (X <sup>2</sup> )	p-value
<b>Gender</b>	3.011	0.083	3.249	0.071	0.881	0.348	0.142	<b>0.707</b>
<b>Employment status</b>	15.555	0.008	8.722	0.121	23.481	0.000	3.357	<b>0.645</b>
<b>Resident Status</b>	27.990	0.000	10.624	0.014	13.263	0.004	9.385	<b>0.025</b>
<b>Education level</b>	3.560	0.469	7.314	0.120	27.741	0.000	3.889	<b>0.421</b>

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

Chi-Square tests show no statistically significant relationship between gender and participation in any tourism category (Natural, Cultural, Beach, or Mixed), as all p-values exceed 0.05. This suggests that gender does not influence the type of tourism chosen. A significant relationship was found between employment status and preferences for natural and beach tourism, with employed individuals more likely to attend these types. No significant association was observed for cultural or mixed tourism.

Tourist resident status (Albanian or foreign) was significantly related to all tourism categories. Albanian tourists tend to prefer beach and mixed tourism, while foreign tourists are more attracted to natural and cultural experiences. These findings highlight the importance of considering national affiliation in tourism marketing and development strategies.

A statistically significant relationship was found between education level and preference for coastal (beach) tourism. Tourists with university and post-university education are more likely to choose beach destinations, while those with only primary or vocational education participate less in this category. This suggests that higher education may be associated with greater interest in, or access to, coastal tourism experiences.

For cultural, natural, and combined tourism, the level of education does not seem to have a statistically significant impact on tourists' selection.

### 5.3 Evaluation of Tourist Satisfaction for Various Aspects

Tourist satisfaction is a key indicator of the success of a tourist destination and helps identify areas that require improvement.

The data show some differences across nature, cultural, beach, and mixed tourism categories. Beach tourists report slightly lower satisfaction with customs and immigration services (4.19) and convenience at entry points (4.10) compared to other groups. All categories rate the ease of finding destination information very high and similarly (4.54–4.56), indicating good accessibility. Cultural tourists give the lowest rating for telecommunications (3.97), suggesting some dissatisfaction in this area.

**Table 5. Access Services and Telecommunications**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist category			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>Customs and immigration services at points of entry</b>	4.22	4.22	4.19	4.23
<b>Convenience at entry points</b>	4.15	4.13	4.10	4.15
<b>Ease of finding information about the destination before the visit</b>	4.54	4.56	4.55	4.55
<b>Telecommunications (telephone, internet...)</b>	4.01	3.97	4.00	4.01

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The table below illustrates tourists' satisfaction with restaurant quality across various categories. Cultural and beach tourists are somewhat less satisfied with local cuisine and drinks (4.25) than nature tourists (4.29), possibly due to higher culinary expectations. Nature and cultural tourists report slightly lower satisfaction with overall restaurant quality (3.67) compared to beach and mixed tourists (3.69), reflecting limited options or elevated expectations. Cultural tourists provided the lowest rating for service quality (3.55), likely due to their demand for high standards. Nature tourists express the greatest dissatisfaction with restaurant facilities (3.27), compared to beach tourists (3.36). **Table 6. Evaluation of the quality of restaurants by tourists**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist category			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>Local cuisine/drinks</b>	4.29	4.25	4.25	4.28
<b>Quality of restaurants</b>	3.67	3.67	3.69	3.69
<b>Quality of services (in restaurants, hotels, etc.)</b>	3.58	3.55	3.56	3.58
<b>The quality of the restaurant building</b>	3.27	3.33	3.36	3.32

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The table below presents tourist satisfaction with accommodation and hospitality across all groups. Cultural tourists rated accommodation quality as the lowest (3.78), indicating higher expectations compared to beach (3.85), nature (3.82), and mixed tourists (3.83). Beach tourists gave the lowest rating

for friendliness (4.32), possibly reflecting unmet expectations of hospitality in coastal areas. They also expressed the most dissatisfaction with children's facilities (3.03), highlighting a lack of services for kids. For foreign language skills of service personnel, cultural tourists rated this aspect slightly lower (3.95) than beach (3.97) and other tourists (3.96), suggesting higher communication expectations in cultural destinations.

**Table 7. Accommodation and hospitality**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist categories			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>Quality of accommodation</b>	3.82	3.78	3.85	3.83
<b>The kindness of people</b>	4.36	4.36	4.32	4.36
<b>Facilities for children</b>	3.04	3.06	3.03	3.04
<b>Degree of foreign language proficiency of service personnel</b>	3.96	3.95	3.97	3.96

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The following table presents data on tourist satisfaction with historical and cultural heritage experiences. Beach tourists report the lowest satisfaction with access to historical sites (4.24), slightly below other groups (4.25), possibly reflecting limited access or a lower interest in cultural visits, as these are not the primary focus of their trips. Cultural tourists are less satisfied with both the interpretation of historical heritage sites (3.89) and related signage (3.87), likely due to higher expectations for educational content and professional presentation. Beach tourists also gave the lowest rating for guide quality (3.95), while cultural tourists rated it more positively (4.04), again pointing to different levels of engagement and expectations regarding historical content.

**Table 8. Appreciation for historical and cultural heritage**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist categories			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>Access to historical heritage sites</b>	4.25	4.25	4.24	4.25
<b>Interpretation of historical heritage sites</b>	3.99	3.89	3.91	3.93
<b>Interpretation/signage of historical heritage sites</b>	3.97	3.87	3.91	3.92
<b>Visitor information at historical heritage sites</b>	3.99	3.92	3.96	3.97
<b>Quality of the guide</b>	4.00	4.04	3.95	4.01

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The table below presents tourist ratings on infrastructure and transport. Cultural tourists are the least satisfied with local transport (3.13), possibly due to inefficiencies in cultural destinations. Nature tourists report the lowest satisfaction with ease of finding locations (4.31), suggesting orientation challenges in natural areas. They also express the most dissatisfaction with parking quality (2.57), followed closely by beach and mixed tourists (2.59). Meanwhile, cultural tourists give the lowest rating for sidewalk quality (2.38), likely reflecting the limitations of historical areas not adapted for pedestrian use.

**Table 9. Assessment for infrastructure and transportation**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist categories			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>Convenience and access to local transportation</b>	3.16	3.13	3.18	3.18
<b>Ease of finding the location</b>	4.31	4.43	4.37	4.37
<b>Quality of parking spaces</b>	2.57	2.61	2.59	2.59
<b>Quality of pedestrian sidewalks</b>	2.47	2.38	2.41	2.44
<b>Interpretation/signage available</b>	3.50	3.50	3.47	3.49

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

The table below presents tourist ratings of various destination aspects in Albania. Natural and cultural beauty is the most appreciated feature, with all groups rating it highly (4.40–4.46), especially cultural tourists (4.46), highlighting its importance in shaping positive experiences. In contrast, toilets and sanitary facilities receive the lowest ratings (2.73–2.80), indicating a clear need for infrastructure improvements. Beach tourists are less satisfied with cleanliness and recreational services, likely due to inadequate family-oriented amenities. Cultural tourists report dissatisfaction with toilet quality and accessibility, suggesting shortcomings in historic area facilities.

**Table 10. Rating of tourist attractions and level of cleanliness**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist categories			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>The natural or cultural beauty of the destination</b>	4.40	4.46	4.41	4.42
<b>Quality of recreational facilities</b>	3.14	3.17	3.20	3.17
<b>Level of cleanliness at the destination</b>	3.42	3.46	3.40	3.43
<b>Quality and accessibility of toilets and sanitary facilities</b>	2.80	2.73	2.76	2.76
<b>The natural or cultural beauty of the destination</b>	4.40	4.46	4.41	4.42

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

Tourists' service ratings highlight important aspects of their experience in Albania. Mixed tourists were slightly less satisfied with shopping options, while beach tourists rated currency exchange services the lowest. Cultural tourists expressed dissatisfaction with card payment availability and personal safety, likely due to limited infrastructure in heritage areas. Nature tourists gave the lowest scores to police services, suggesting a need for improved law enforcement presence in remote locations.

**Table 11. Tourists' evaluation of other services**

Aspects to be evaluated	Tourist categories			
	Natural	Cultural	Beach	Mix
<b>The natural or cultural beauty of the destination</b>	4.40	4.46	4.41	4.42
<b>Quality of recreational facilities</b>	3.14	3.17	3.20	3.17
<b>Level of cleanliness at the destination</b>	3.42	3.46	3.40	3.43
<b>Quality and accessibility of toilets and sanitary facilities</b>	2.80	2.73	2.76	2.76
<b>The natural or cultural beauty of the destination</b>	4.40	4.46	4.41	4.42

*Source: Prepared by author, 2025*

### Services with the lowest satisfaction level as perceived by tourists

Based on the data collected, this session examines the services that received the lowest ratings from tourists in Albania, identifying aspects that require improvement in their experience.

#### *Telecommunications (telephone, internet)*

The telecommunications service has been identified as one of the most problematic aspects for tourists in Albania. Ratings for this service range from 3.97 to 4.01, with tourists, particularly including those in the cultural tourism category, expressing greater dissatisfaction.

#### *Quality of restaurant facilities*

The quality of restaurant facilities has received low ratings, ranging from 3.27 for tourists belonging to the nature tourism category to 3.36 for those in the beach category. These ratings suggest that the restaurant infrastructure is not in line with visitors' expectations.

*Child facilities*

Another area identified with dissatisfaction is the provision of child facilities. Ratings for this aspect are relatively low, ranging from 3.03 to 3.06.

This data shows that families with children do not feel satisfied with the opportunities offered to them.

*Quality of pedestrian walkways*

The quality of pedestrian walkways is an issue that tourists express low ratings, ranging from 2.38 to 2.47.

*Quality and accessibility of toilets and sanitary facilities*

Ratings for the quality and accessibility of toilets and sanitary facilities have also been low, with ratings ranging from 2.73 to 2.80. Ease of card payments (debit/credit)

The service of card payment facilities has also been identified as an area for improvement. Ratings for this aspect range from 3.25 to 3.28, suggesting that assistance and opportunities for electronic payments are insufficient.

**5.4 Analysis of the Least Valued Services with ANOVA**

This session focuses on the evaluation of tourism services in Albania through ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), which identifies statistical differences between different groups of tourists. The results of the analysis show how tourists' perceptions differ according to their categories, including nature, cultural, coastal, and mixed tourism. This analysis helps identify areas for improvement and provides recommendations for destination managers and policymakers, emphasizing the importance of improving services to increase tourist satisfaction and contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in Albania.

*Facilities for children*

As for the facilities for children, there is a statistically significant difference between tourist categories in terms of the evaluation of facilities for children. This may indicate that a category of tourists, such as family tourists who are more oriented towards nature or beach holidays, feel more dissatisfied with this service compared to tourists who follow cultural or mixed activities.

*Telecommunications (telephone, internet)*

The results for this aspect show that there are statistically significant differences between tourists' perceptions regarding the quality of telecommunication services. Cultural tourists show significant dissatisfaction with the quality of telephony and the internet. This can be interpreted by assuming that tourists who follow cultural or business activities may have higher demands for fast and stable internet access. Beach and nature tourists, who focus more on relaxation and outdoor activities, may not have the same level of telecommunication requirements.

*Quality of pedestrian sidewalks*

The statistically significant differences found regarding the quality of sidewalks suggest that cultural tourists are more dissatisfied with pedestrian infrastructure than other categories. Cultural tourists, who are likely to explore cities on foot and visit cultural sites, may feel more deprived of pedestrian infrastructure compared to nature or beach tourists, who may spend less time in the city.

*Ease of card payments (debit/credit)*

A highly significant statistical difference indicates that perceptions of the ease of card payments vary significantly among different tourists. International tourists or those travelling for cultural or mixed holidays may be less satisfied with the card payment infrastructure compared to beach or nature tourists, who may have lower demands for these services during their stay.

*Quality of restaurant facilities*

There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of the quality of restaurant facilities between different categories of tourists. This suggests that this aspect of service is perceived similarly by all tourists, regardless of the type of tourism they follow.

*Quality and accessibility of toilets and sanitary facilities*

Although there is no statistically significant difference, tourists seem to have similar perceptions of the quality and accessibility of toilets and sanitary facilities, regardless of their category.

From the ANOVA analysis, we can say that different types of tourism in Albania exhibit different perceptions of several important aspects of services, including facilities for children, telecommunications, quality of sidewalks, and ease of card payments. These results indicate that some categories of tourists may experience more pronounced problems with these specific aspects of services. This information may be important for policymakers and destination managers to improve the quality of services that better respond to different tourist demands.

## 6. Conclusions and Implications

### Demographic Changes

This paper introduces a novel segmentation of tourists in the Albanian context into nature, cultural, beach, and mixed categories, offering fresh insights into destination preferences and visitor profiles. The analysis of tourist profiles across the four main categories, nature, cultural, beach, and mixed, reveals only minor demographic differences. Employment status appears to influence destination preferences, with employed individuals more inclined toward nature and beach tourism. Residency also plays a role: Albanian tourists tend to prefer beach destinations, whereas foreign tourists are more attracted to cultural and nature-based experiences.

Age distribution shows that the 26–35 age group is the most active across all segments, particularly in beach tourism, while older age groups, especially those aged 56 and above, are underrepresented. Gender does not significantly impact destination choice, as male and female tourists are evenly distributed across all categories.

### Differences by Tourist Segments

Service evaluations vary notably across the four tourist segments, reflecting distinct expectations and satisfaction levels. Cultural tourists tend to be the most demanding, particularly in areas such as information services, accommodation quality, historical interpretation, and staff professionalism. They also report the greatest dissatisfaction with telecommunications and signage.

Nature tourists, while valuing authenticity and simplicity, express concerns regarding inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, limited child-friendly amenities, and subpar restaurant facilities.



Beach tourists, despite being the highest spenders on average, are less satisfied with overall cleanliness, the convenience of card payments, and services for families with children.

Mixed tourists offer more balanced assessments but still share common concerns related to basic infrastructure and essential services.

### **Implications for Tourism Agencies**

- Tourism agencies should apply more targeted marketing strategies based on behavioral segmentation, not only on demographic characteristics.
- For example, cultural tourists would benefit from offers focused on guided tours, historical interpretation, and high-standard hospitality. In contrast, nature tourists would be more responsive to offers that highlight outdoor exploration and sustainability.
- Albanian agencies should also recognize the potential of foreign tourists, who show a strong preference for cultural and natural destinations, and tailor multilingual and culturally adapted experiences for them.

### **Implications for Policymakers**

- Investments are urgently needed in basic infrastructure, especially in aspects that received the lowest ratings: telecommunications, child-friendly facilities, toilets, pedestrian pathways, and card payment systems.
- Improving telecommunication services is particularly important in natural and cultural destinations, where tourists expect better connectivity.
- Cultural destinations should be prioritized for enhancements in signage, interpretive materials, and staff training to match the high expectations of cultural tourists.
- Public policies should aim for balanced development across all segments, ensuring both domestic and international tourists experience high service quality and comfort.

### **Study Limitations**

This study presents some methodological limitations:

- The assumptions of ANOVA, including variance homogeneity and balanced group sizes, were not always fully met, which may affect the reliability of some comparisons.
- The uneven sample sizes across tourism categories limit the generalizability of some statistical findings.
- The study relies on basic inferential techniques (Chi-Square and ANOVA) without the use of more advanced modeling methods (e.g., multinomial regression or cluster analysis), which could offer deeper insights into behavioral segmentation.
- The cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to observe changes in tourist behavior over time.
- The sampling strategy was accidental, meaning respondents were selected based on convenience rather than a randomized method, which may introduce bias and limit the representativeness of the results.

➤ Data were collected during the summer season, potentially introducing a seasonal bias, as preferences and travel behaviors may differ in other periods of the year

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