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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Prof. Dr.
Sokol Abazi
Editor-in-Chief

Dear Esteemed Readers,

As Editor-in-Chief, I am pleased to welcome you all to the May Issue 2023 of the CIT Review Journal.

The academic disciplines covered by the articles in this issue are diverse. To ensure that the articles met our standards for academic integrity and quality, peer review was conducted before they were selected for publication.

I would like to sincerely thank each and every member of the editorial team for their contributions. Their commitment to upholding integrity and maintaining the journal's standards of quality are truly appreciated.

Moreover, I would like to take this chance to thank the reviewers who gave their time and expertise to improve the manuscripts. Their recommendations significantly improved the articles' overall content.

I sincerely hope that these contributions will lead to more debate and research advancement.

As we work to create a space that encourages research and information sharing, we value your input and suggestions.

Warm regards,

Prof. Dr. Sokol Abazi
Editor-in-Chief

EDITORIAL

FOSTERING RESILIENCE: ANALYZING THE SKILL SET OF WOMEN IN THE CYBERSECURITY SECTOR

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INTRODUCTION:

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the significance of robust cybersecurity mea-sures cannot be overstated. As technology permeates every aspect of our lives, the threats posed by cybercriminals are escalating. To combat these challenges effectively, it is crucial to tap into the diverse talent pool and promote the cybersecurity sector. These editorial aims to shed light on the status of women in the field of cybersecurity in Albania, providing insights that underscore the need for enhanced efforts to empower and engage women in this critical domain.

Women remain underrepresented in the cybersecurity workforce worldwide, and Albania is no exception. The exact figures may vary, but various reports and studies suggest that women account for around 20% to 24% of cybersecurity professionals globally, while men make up the majority. Such disparities indicate the urgent need to address the gender gap and foster an environment that encourages women to pursue careers in cybersecurity. (ISC)2 estimates the global cybersecurity workforce in 2022 at 4.7 million, an 11.1% increase over last year, representing 464,000 more jobs.

BENEFITS OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN CYBER-SECURITY:

Promoting gender diversity in the cyber-security sector offers numerous advantages. Research has shown that diverse teams are more innovative, creative, and effective in tackling complex problems. By neglecting the talents and perspectives of women, the cybersecurity industry in Albania is missing out on a wealth of untapped potential. Encouraging the inclusion of talented individuals and their participation in this domain will foster a diverse and inclusive workforce, which can lead to better decision-making, enhanced problem-solving capabilities, and improved overall cybersecurity measures. To bridge the gender gap in cybersecurity, concerted efforts must be made at multiple levels. Here are some key initiatives that can be undertaken in Albania:

a. Education and Awareness:

Promote cybersecurity education and awareness programs targeting interested individuals at various educational stages, including both technical and soft skills, as cyber security is an interdisciplinary approach to the protection of infrastructure, technology in general and people.

b. Industry Collaboration:

Foster collaboration between academia, industry, and government bodies to create opportunities in the cybersecurity sector. Establish partnerships with organizations that actively promote the solution of main security concerns, supporting initiatives that provide scholarships, internships, and networking opportunities.

c. Role Models and Leadership:

Highlight successful individuals in cybersecurity as role models to inspire and motivate aspiring professionals. Encourage leaders in the industry to share their experiences and insights through mentorship programs and conferences, helping to break stereotypes and cultivate a supportive environment.

MEASURING PROGRESS: TRACKING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION:

To evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to empower women in the cybersecurity sector, it is essential to monitor progress. Regular data collection and analysis on women's representation in the industry, academic institutions, and training programs can provide insights into trends and identify areas that require further attention. By establishing baseline statistics and monitoring changes over time, stakeholders can measure the impact of initiatives and adjust strategies accordingly.

Finally, regardless of the reasons why there is a shortage of women in the field of cyber security, it is important to consider the problem the other way round: why women are considered important in cyber security, or what is the unique set of skills that they bring to the table? As a cyber professional and researcher, here are a few of these reasons, which hopefully will resonate to the reader:

1. Diverse perspectives

Women in cybersecurity can bring a diverse range of experiences and per-spectives to the table, which can lead to a more well-rounded and inclusive approach to problem-solving and decision-making.

2. Empathy and communication skills

Women in cybersecurity often possess strong empathy and communication skills, which can be invaluable in building trust and understanding with clients, stakeholders, and other team members.

3. Attention to detail

Women in cybersecurity can bring a strong attention to detail and a focus on thoroughness, which can be critical in identifying and mitigating cyber threats, as well as designing and fine-tunning algorithms and security mechanisms.

4. Collaboration and teamwork

Women in cybersecurity often have a strong orientation towards collaboration and teamwork, which can lead to more effective and efficient responses to cyber threats.

5. Creative problem-solving

Women in cybersecurity can bring a unique and creative approach to problem-solving, which can lead to innovative solutions to complex cyber threats.

CONCLUSION:

Albania, like many other countries, faces a significant gender gap in the cybersecurity sector. Addressing this disparity is not only a matter of inclusivity but also a necessity to strengthen cybersecurity defences and safeguard critical infrastructure. By actively promoting talented men and women, providing educational opportunities, and fostering a supportive environment, Albania can harness the untapped potential of everyone to advance its cybersecurity capabilities. It is through such inclusive efforts that we can build a resilient and secure digital future for all.

Efforts to bridge the gender gap in the cybersecurity field in Albania must be met with a sense of urgency. The increasing prevalence of cyber threats and the critical role of cybersecurity in protecting individuals, organizations, and the nation necessitate a diverse and inclusive workforce. By doing so, Albania can tap into a vast pool of talent, skills, and perspectives that will enhance its cybersecurity capabilities and resilience. In conclusion, the journey to bridge the workforce and the gender gap in cybersecurity in Albania requires a collective and sustained commitment.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY AND INNOVATION AND REVENUE GROWTH: A CASE STUDY OF THREE GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY GIANTS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper aims to explore current market trends adopted by technology giants Apple Inc., Samsung, and Xiaomi and their impact on revenue generation. Through content analysis of internal documents, websites, and social media, a SWOT analysis and correlation analysis were conducted to identify the trends used by these companies. The findings indicate that companies with effective trend strategies achieved higher revenues. The prevalent trends include machine learning, artificial intelligence, corporate sustainability, environmental implications, and product quality optimization. The results of this paper provide valuable insights for businesses seeking to align their strategies with current trends, serve as a teaching resource, and offer a foundation for further research on the impact of trends on sales. Additional data can be collected to expand the investigation to other relevant subjects.

Keywords: *Trends, quality, innovation, technology companies, revenue*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, the emergence of artificial intelligence and advanced algorithms has led to a heightened emphasis on quality and innovation across various business domains. Churin et al. (2022) point out that in a dynamically changing environment that is abundantly used by technology, it is important to remember that the use of technology and information systems as a tool for companies and governments is not only based on increasing business revenues but should also focus on creating valuable experiences, improving services, and discovering new trends in the market environment. In a dynamically changing business environment, there is a need to build value, bring new innovative ideas, and use their skills and capabilities to influence the performance, competitive advantage, economic development, and success of the whole business (Lorincova, Miklosik, & Hitka, 2022). Mietule, Maksymova, and Holikova (2019) argue that in the current digital communication environment, digital technologies are developing global trade and business, which has a positive impact on companies as customers can buy their products from all corners of the world from the comfort of their homes. Dugia et al. (2022) define that digital capabilities positively affect the performance of a company only if the company is sufficiently technologically savvy and can handle and transform information efficiently and effectively for its benefit. Marketers are increasingly seeking to get their messages and information out to social media users, who in turn share it with their contacts, so the product, service, or idea reaches a larger number of potential consumers (Duque et al. 2020). This is also confirmed by experts Ghorbani, Karampela, and Tonner (2022), who state that in today's digital era, the importance of digital marketing as a way of providing new information and selling services and products has increased to a great extent. Kaira, Vaschenko, and Vaschenko (2020) and Artemenko and Gavrilova (2021) assert that the competitiveness of enterprises is contingent upon the implementation of efficacious marketing communication tactics, which, when executed appropriately, result in increased profitability and the acquisition of a non-competitive edge. In recent times, a multitude of adverse factors have significantly impacted the market. These include, first of all, the global pandemic COVID-19 and the invasion of Russian troops into the territory of Ukraine, where fighting is still going on and the times are therefore very uncertain (Bezakova, Tomova, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to correctly and clearly define the strategy of the enterprise so that, together, the whole organisation walks towards the set goal. Rudiawarni et al. (2022) have verified that organisations that establish a well-defined and unambiguous strategy and execute it effectively exhibit superior performance compared to those that lack a clear strategy. According to Cilento et al. (2022), not only is it important in implementing a strategy to set it correctly and clearly, but also to create trust with subordinates in the process of implementing the strategy.

According to Lukac et al. (2020), the significance of quality cannot be overstated, as it plays a pivotal role in determining the success of an organization. Mittal and Gupta (2021) have affirmed that the execution of total quality management initiatives leads to an enhancement in both product quality and customer satisfaction, resulting in improved performance and increased sales. Rauter et al. (2019) argue that in light of the growing complexity of products and services, companies must adopt novel practices in order to remain competitive. The discourse surrounding quality is pervasive; however, it is imperative that a plethora of knowledge, expertise, and proficiencies be effectively employed and leveraged (Martin, Elg, & Gremyr, 2020). The digital transformation of the economy is closely linked to the evolution of society and the advancements in digital technology. Despite the benefits that digital technologies offer to companies, the drivers of this transformation encounter various internal and external organizational challenges (Bai, 2021). As per the findings of Mohamed Ali (2020), service quality holds significant importance for enterprises as it exhibits a positive correlation with customer loyalty. Thus, it becomes crucial for organizations to consistently maintain and enhance their service quality to ensure customer retention. The attainment of quality is a crucial and indispensable factor in the achievement of success for a business. According to Rats et al. (2022), the variations in quality management are contingent upon factors such as the scale of the enterprise, the sector in which it operates, the technological infrastructure employed by the organization, and the industry's performance as determined by the value added. Stachova et al. (2021) and Yuan, Wang, and Liu (2023) contend that in order to achieve business growth and uphold quality standards, it is imperative to adopt an appropriate human resource management policy that encompasses various aspects such as employee selection, motivation, recognition, and compassionate treatment of subordinates. Hedenus, Backman, and Hakansson (2019) posit that the enhancement of a company's quality is contingent upon the implementation of a structured quality management system and the provision of adequate training to employees. Zilincikova and Stofkova (2020) corroborate this fact by asserting that education is a crucial component not only in personal life but also in the professional sphere, as knowledgeable employees can significantly contribute to the growth of an organization. According to Levkin (2020), a crucial element of achieving prosperity in an enterprise is not limited to the education of employees but also encompasses the education of managers, who hold a pivotal position in overseeing the quality of the organization. The assertion is corroborated by Wallo et al. (2021), who augment the discourse by positing that managers in an organization do not solely function as task-givers but primarily endeavour to inspire, instruct, assist, and exemplify their subordinates, not only within the workplace milieu but also in their daily lives. In the context of a business environment that is subject to constant change, it is imperative to cultivate value, generate novel and inventive concepts, and leverage one's skills and competencies to exert a positive impact on the overall performance, competitive positioning, economic growth, and prosperity of the enterprise (Deshati, Gorica, 2022). According to Allahar (2019), there exist multiple approaches to innovation that are contingent upon the specific requirements, tactics, and objectives of the enterprise. Villaluz and Hechanova (2019) suggest that one strategy for promoting innovation is to establish a culture of innovation. Their findings indicate that in family firms, innovation culture is primarily influenced by leaders, whereas in non-family firms, leaders exert influence on innovation through the implementation of strategic measures, incentivization, and performance evaluation. Collaboration with external partners is a widely recognized approach that can facilitate innovation. This approach is gaining significance due to its potential to accelerate innovation, distribute costs, mitigate risks, and enhance market penetration (Lesakova, Gundova, & Kral, 2020). The allocation of resources towards research and development is a crucial factor in the growth and competitiveness of a company. Cui, Tong, and Tan (2022) posit that the utilization of information technology (IT) can result in enhanced innovation performance, thereby increasing competitiveness within the market landscape. According to Dana et al. (2022), the advent and proliferation of digital technologies have amplified the potential for innovation and exerted a significant impact on business innovation in global markets. The significance of digital innovation management, encompassing both open innovation and dominant design, cannot be overstated in terms of its impact on innovation performance, as posited by Nylund and Brem (2021). Chesbrough (2020) posits that the analysis of innovations is predominantly centered around cost considerations, specifically the decision to produce or procure, with firms typically opting for the alternative that is more cost-effective. Sa´adon, Amr, and Amiruddin (2019) posit that two distinct types of innovations, namely radical and incremental innovations, have a positive impact on the financial performance of firms. Barabino (2019) posits that innovations are defined as entities such as products, services, and processes that yield favourable outcomes for the organization. Innovation has been significantly impacted by various adverse factors in recent times. The events under consideration encompass, primarily, the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 and the encroachment of Russian military forces onto Ukrainian soil, where hostilities persist, and the prevailing circumstances are consequently characterized by considerable ambiguity (Bezakova & Tomova, 2020). Svabov, Kramarov, and Chabadov (2022) assert that global economic development was considerably impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic also presented opportunities in the form of novel technological reforms and economic structures, particularly the transition to online platforms. The proliferation of digital technologies has intensified competition, thereby necessitating businesses to prioritize customer demands and deliver goods or services that align with their preferences while ensuring optimal quality (Siwiec & Pacana, 2022). In contemporary times, ecology has emerged as a highly pertinent subject matter, with a growing emphasis on the provision and utilization of environmentally friendly

products. As per Trapp and Kanbach's (2021) findings, enterprises that operate on sustainable models, technologies, and practices are increasingly being perceived as cleaner and more appealing to consumers. Yousaf (2021) has substantiated the veracity of this assertion, contending that the adoption of green practices, innovations, and dynamic capabilities by businesses can facilitate sustainable development and yield enduring financial gains. Selecting an appropriate communication channel for a product is imperative in order to enhance consumer engagement, fulfil elevated customer expectations, enhance services, and incorporate data that can be utilized in the future (Chygryn et al., 2020). Ma, Wu, and Peng (2017) conducted a questionnaire survey and found that the implementation of green marketing can enhance the rate of return on assets for enterprises. Furthermore, their research suggests that the effectiveness of green marketing is positively correlated with the duration and investment in such marketing efforts. Nath and Siepong (2022) have observed that the effectiveness of promoting green marketing practices varies across different companies. Alec and Draghici (2021) assert that contemporary businesses are observing a growing demand from customers for customized products that cater to their individual preferences and requirements while simultaneously ensuring that the benefits and costs are mutually beneficial for both the company and the customer. Nonetheless, formulating a universal guideline for adhering to prevailing trends during the current volatile era is unattainable. Dubec (2017) asserts that the product must generate high-quality visualization and presentation. Investment in innovation, quality, and logistics is imperative to ensuring expedited delivery times.

The data for both research inquiries will be obtained through the examination of the internal charters, social networks, and websites of the companies. The proposed methodology involves conducting a comparative analysis of the product portfolios and sales of three chosen companies, followed by a cross-comparison of the three entities.

The aim of the paper is to identify and find current trends in technology companies and given their revenues, to propose suitable trends for the technology segment that they could apply in their companies.

RQ1: What are the three most prevalent contemporary trends among the technology firms that were surveyed?

Each corporation employs a distinct approach to its strategy implementation; however, it is crucial that it be established accurately and efficiently to cater to the company's needs. By implementing appropriate tools, a corporation can enhance its market position and augment revenue generated from the provision of goods or services. According to Zapletalova (2022), the proper establishment of an enterprise's strategic plan can lead to business success and competitiveness within the market environment.

RQ2: In what ways do these trends impact sales?

The second inquiry is predicated upon the antecedent query and, as such, is integrally connected to the data garnered from the initial investigation. Staying up to date with market trends is a crucial aspect for both for-profit and not-for-profit entities, including businesses, corporations, and institutions. This holds significant importance in the operations of all such business entities, as noted by Linchpin et al. (2023). According to Buljubasic and Kotrla (2018), the strategic selection of tools and effective promotion of products can result in a competitive edge and subsequent growth in sales.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Upon contemplation of the literature review and the social exigencies delineated therein, we shall proceed to analyze a dataset pertaining to technology enterprises, namely Apple Inc., Samsung, and Xiaomi. Present research inquiries will be scrutinized through the application of selected methodologies.

Regarding the first research question, the methodology will involve utilizing data obtained from the companies' websites and social media platforms. Additionally, observations will be made based on the survey conducted through the companies' websites and other available sources within the online environment.

In addressing research question 2, the paper will utilize internal data from the companies' sales records, with a particular focus on the sales figures for the entire year of 2021. This approach is intended to ensure that the data is comprehensive and not subject to any form of bias. Additionally, the paper will employ the same methodology as in research question 1, namely content analysis of the companies' social media platforms and websites.

Research question 1 entails the development of a SWOT analysis of prevailing technological trends, utilizing a point scale to evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Subsequently, recommendations for enhancing these trends will be proposed. It is my contention that the aforementioned tools possess the capability to effectively discern the prevailing patterns employed by major corporations, thereby enabling me to conduct an evaluation of the most proficient company in this regard. Additionally, I will conduct a comparative analysis of the methodologies employed by the companies and assess their similarities and differences vis-à-vis their rivals.

Research question 2 will be analyzed using the correlation analysis method in Excel, specifically the CORREL function to calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient:

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(X_i - \bar{X})^2}\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n}(Y_i - \overline{Y})^2}}, \quad (1)$$

where $\bar{A}\ a\ \bar{B}$ are weighted arithmetic mean.

The present paper aims to investigate the associations between trends and the revenues of major corporations. In this discourse, I shall expound on the influence of corporate sales on the utilized patterns. Moreover, upon scrutinizing the internal charters of the companies, particularly their sales figures for the year 2021, I will be capable of ascertaining the present condition of their quality and innovation.

Upon analysing the outcomes of the prevalent patterns observed in the technological landscape, the gathered insights can be leveraged by technology enterprises seeking to enhance their calibre and ingenuity, or alternatively, to align with the prevailing market trends.

RESULTS

The present paper will present an analysis of the three major technology corporations and report the findings derived from the application of rigorous data analysis techniques.

The following entities that will be delineated are Apple Inc, Samsung, and Xiaomi. The aforementioned entities are enterprises engaged in the production and distribution of technological apparatus, as well as the provision of associated services.

The tech giant Apple Inc. was founded in 1976. University students Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak founded the firm. The business initially developed practical and useful computers to make enormous, bulky computers more manageable. However, the first Apple I computer was a simple wooden box with minimal arithmetic capabilities. It was a major technological advance. The company started with $1300. The business has grown significantly and is now well-known. It is reliable and profitable (Faizal, 2021). However, the company faced obstacles. Three CEOs, including Steve Jobs, resigned over numerous years. The corporation was near bankruptcy during this turbulent time. Steve Jobs returned to Apple Inc., advancing the company with his incomparable intelligence. His leadership helped the company overcome adversity and become one of the world's most valued. Employees disliked Steve Jobs' harsh supervision. His focus on product design and user experience helped the company. Thus, the products' strong demand and steady growth Due to health difficulties, Steve Jobs resigned in 2011 and died the following year. Tim Cook took over and still works there. Like Steve Jobs, the person in question has done well in pushing the company forward. The California-based firm is worth $355.1 billion. Apple Inc. earned $101 billion in 2021, according to Curry (2022). According to Curry's (2022) estimate, revenues increased to $365 billion in 2022.

Samsung was founded in 1938; however, the corporation has changed significantly. The company sold seafood, veggies, and homemade noodles. Lee Byung-chul, who wanted to grow his business-like Steve Jobs, founded it. He invested in technology and electronics in the late 1960s to fulfil his goals. A 1970 monochrome television sold 1 million units in six years. The company expanded its product portfolio to include televisions, washing machines, microwave ovens, and tele-communication devices by allocating more resources to technology. Motorola beat the company's phone output at first. The company sold components to other manufacturers until they could make a phone that met the brand's standards due to the phones' poor quality. The user's citation includes the author's last name and publication year, following academic writing traditions. It's hard to identify the academic work without context. Today, the corporation holds 20% of the mobile phone industry and is well known. The company supplies Apple and other multinationals. The business recently presented a foldable phone, which it sees as a future improvement. One of the largest global enterprises, the company is valued at $107.3 billion. According to Yordan (2022), 2021 revenues reached $232 billion.

Xiaomi, a 13-year-old brand formed in 2010, is a rising brand. The company started in China only. It left China in 2014, four years after its creation. The company makes mobile devices, computer software, and consumer electronics. The company prioritizes quality above price, unlike Apple. It makes smartphones, laptops, smart watches, CPUs, scooters, software, and smart home goods. Xiaomi became the world's fourth-largest smartphone provider in 2015. Due to its high-quality, low-cost products, Presthith and Goswami (2021) expect the company to grow steadily. Udin (2022) reported 2021 revenues of US$51.5 billion.

TRENDS OF TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

Apple's strategy distinguishes them from other brands and huge corporations. The company is proud of its customer loyalty. The company pioneered Apple I, Apple II, and Macintosh computers. The company's biggest achievement in the 21st century was diversifying into portable functional gadgets from computing devices. The technology boom benefited the corporation from this strategic decision. The company sells Macbooks, iPhones, iPads, Apple Watches, and accessories, including AirPods. Apple offers software services, including Apple Music, Apple TV+, ICloud storage, and Apple Arcade, in addition to hardware. Profits are high due to the company's diversified offerings. Apple's history of technological innovation suggests it will continue to create new products that consumers will like and boost revenue. Apple Inc. integrates artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other technologies into its devices and services. Siri, the voice assistant on all devices, pioneered this field. Voice control of all items boosts their value. It also improves its cognitive and communicative abilities with Apple product consumers. Apple Inc. removed charging adapters and headphones from its latest smartphones to enhance environmental sustainability. The corporation cited environmental concerns for this move. In 2021, Apple emitted 23.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, according to Whitham (2022). This calls into question whether the company's recent steps are enough and whether it should prioritize fixing its environmentally detrimental production practices. Since its founding, the company has been inventive and recognized. The company's

self-created IOS operating system and exclusive use of internal resources create a product ecosystem. The end user benefits from expanded interconnectivity and product functionality. Apple Inc. devices are less susceptible to viral attacks and have sophisticated anti-virus software. Apple emphasizes product quality and design. The company's revolutionary products are meticulously detailed, resulting in fewer hardware and software faults than its competitors. They may not be the first to propose revolutionary features and goods, but they have a remarkable capacity to improve and perfect these offers with rigorous attention to detail, resulting in a nearly bug-free customer experience. The reason Apple products are so popular is intriguing. Apple emphasizes customer experience, so committed customers create films and product reviews and post them on social media. The company's ability to provide an experience beyond buying explains this. Products must be simple enough for non-technical people to use. Customers can visit one of the 25 Apple Stores worldwide for device troubles. These stores' skilled personnel can help consumers resolve their issues (Apple.com). The company's unique and extensive product offerings eliminate the necessity for large discounts. The company's website rarely offers student discounts, usually around September. "Back to School" offers a 10% discount on Apple products specifically to education sector students and personnel.

Samsung differs from Apple. Samsung is keeping up with market changes and trends in technology. Like Apple Inc., this technology corporation must constantly innovate and set new market trends. The previous section described the company's early years. The company manufactures smartphones, televisions, computers, home appliances, cameras, industrial equipment, monitoring devices, and audio equipment. The company's broad focus on technology is significant. The corporation has held a strong market position despite its extensive and diverse portfolio. Samsung, like Apple Inc., is using voice-activated smart home equipment to improve AI. The organization must ensure that the AI system can foresee and meet user needs. Simultaneously, a corporation must link their artificial intelligence (AI) services to all of their devices to ensure optimal efficiency and ease of use for users of all technical proficiency levels, from IT technicians to regular users. Joining RE100 shows Samsung's commitment to sustainability. The company wants zero device emissions by 2050. This ambitious initiative might reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 17 million metric tons by 2021. The company also plans to increase water efficiency to reduce pumping and encourage water reuse (Samsung Newsroom, 2022). In 2020, the company reintroduced the popular "V" touchscreen phones, a mobile phone industry milestone. Due to its tiny form, this smartphone has received mixed reviews. Whatever the response, this technological achievement is noteworthy. Foldable touchscreen phones were unthinkable a few years ago. Foldable phones may one day replace bulky mobile gadgets. This could let people who prefer smaller gadgets carry them. The South Korean corporation is focusing on virtual reality, which lets people experience simulated environments. Samsung and app and game developers are working together. Virtual reality will be used for gaming, pleasure, education, medicine, the military, and industry in the future. Virtual reality technology simulates actual experiences in a synthetic environment, helping prepare for real-life circumstances and improving response time, especially in cognitively taxing conditions.

Xiaomi, a young Chinese digital company, is known for its innovative and affordable products. Xiaomi, like its predecessors, offers many items. These items include intelligent mobile phones, wrist-worn smartwatches and bracelets, automated vacuum cleaners, home automation systems, electrically powered scooters, portable computing devices, and compact audio amplification systems. The company's shorter market duration than its competitors makes it a fascinating and promising future prospect. Xiaomi is focusing on AI and machine learning research. Their devices are being updated to improve the user experience and customer happiness. For robotic vacuum cleaner owners, this solution eliminates the need for manual cleaning. The vacuum cleaner cleans the flat independently, simplifying the user's daily routine. Given its large subscriber base, the company under consideration must prioritize environmental issues. According to the press announcement, the company processed 3,386 metric tons of kitchen garbage in 2021, producing 328 metric tons of fertilizer and animal feed. Xiaomi said that their parks saved 2,000 metric tons of water and 16,339 metric tons of greenhouse gases. The data shows the company's efforts within its capabilities.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

APPLE INC.

Strengths

Apple Inc. exhibits notable strengths in the realm of market trends, owing to its extensive tenure and consequent establishment of a robust market position. As one of the most valuable companies in the current market environment, Apple's longevity has contributed to its success. Despite having a wide-ranging portfolio, the company endeavors to prioritize environmental conservation and sustainability. Failure to consider this aspect would result in significant adverse effects on the environment. An additional notable aspect pertains to the extensive range of offerings, catering to the diverse preferences of potential consumers. Ultimately, the suitability of a particular product is contingent upon the user's expectations and financial circumstances. Apple Inc. is widely recognized for the exceptional quality and design of their product portfolio, a key strength that has been emphasized since the company's inception and continues to be upheld today. Despite the varying price points of the products, they are all meticulously crafted with a high standard of quality and design, ultimately contributing to the company's overall sales performance.

Weaknesses

The firm's product portfolio is characterized by a premium pricing strategy, which may represent a potential vulnerability vis-à-vis rival firm. Nevertheless, Apple's organizational resilience is such that it is not compelled to yield to competitive pressures in this domain. Simultaneously, there exist promotional activities linked to the aforementioned product, which the organization does not accord significant emphasis to and refrains from offering substantial promotions to its clientele throughout the year. The sole exemption pertains to the annual September discount promotion on Apple products, known as "Back to School, which offers a 10% discount on specific products to eligible students and school personnel. This discount is contingent on their status as students or employees of educational institutions. One potential limitation experienced by users of Apple products pertains to the lack of compatibility with alternative operating systems. This is due to the fact that Apple maintains complete control over the design and maintenance of its proprietary system. One potential drawback of the firm is its reliance on external sources for the production of OLED displays and chips utilized in its devices. This could potentially lead to production and sales delays, thereby adversely affecting the company's financial standing.

Opportunities

In the current era of rapid technological advancement, businesses are increasingly adopting digital, automated, and robotic processes. In this context, machine learning presents a significant opportunity for technology companies and major market players such as Apple. By enabling computers to make data-driven decisions and address challenges across diverse industries, machine learning has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing organizational performance. One potential avenue for the company's growth is to expand its global presence by establishing additional Apple Stores. This is due to the continued demand for the company's products and the appeal of the stores' knowledgeable and proficient staff, who are capable of providing comprehensive guidance and addressing any concerns. The Czech Republic currently lacks an Apple Store, with the closest locations residing in Austria and Germany. This phenomenon is associated with the endeavor to penetrate novel markets and enhance brand recognition in regions where the adoption rate is relatively low, even though the populace still exhibits a keen interest in the commodities.

Threats

The potential impact of legislative procedures and governmental actions poses a significant threat to the company. Given its location in the United States, forecasting the trajectory of future legislation is a challenging task. An additional challenge that presents difficulties for companies is the unpredictability of unforeseen circumstances, including but not limited to crises, market contractions, unfavorable social conditions, and global pandemics. The unpredictability of adverse circumstances notwithstanding, the organization can enhance its preparedness and responsiveness vis-à-vis past years by drawing from the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a significant global crisis.

Table 1 SWOT analysis of Apple's marketing communications

Strengths	Importance	Score	Score vs importance	Total
Strong company	0,5	5	2,5	6,7
Emphasis on the environment	0,5	4	2	
Broad portfolio	0,3	4	1,2	
Quality and design	0,2	5	1	
Weaknesses	Importance	Score	Score vs importance	Total
High price products	0,5	4	2	5,1
Non-provision of actions	0,2	4	0,8	
Incompatibility with other OS	0,3	5	1,5	
Dependence on limited resources	0,2	4	0,8	
Opportunities	Importance	Score	Score vs importance	Total
Machine Learning	0,5	5	2,5	6,9
Construction of additional stores	0,2	4	0,8	
Qualified experts	0,2	4	0,8	
Expansion into other markets	0,1	3	0,3	
Threats	Importance	Score	Score vs importance	Total
Legislation	0,5	4	2	4,9
Measures	0,3	4	1,2	
Crisis	0,3	3	0,9	
Market downturn	0,2	2	0,4	

SAMSUNG

Strengths

Samsung's competitive advantages lie in its robust brand reputation, which has been established over a prolonged period of time, allowing it to secure a formidable market position. The company exhibits a notable strength in its commitment to innovation and the continuous enhancement and optimization of its technological capabilities. The company places significant emphasis on technological advancements, leading to its ongoing development. Similar to Apple Inc., Samsung boasts a diverse range of offerings, providing customers with a wide selection of products to choose from. The company allocates a significant amount of funds towards research and development endeavours, which have the potential to yield various advantages in the future, encompassing both monetary and non-monetary gains.

Weaknesses

The elevated cost of merchandise from the South Korean conglomerate is attributable to the company's extensive user base, which is willing to pay a premium for superior quality, design, and functionality. Regrettably, this phenomenon does not consistently translate to the quality and design of the craftsmanship. Simultaneously, it is imperative for the company to adopt a more customer-centric approach and enhance its communication with them. This can be achieved through diverse events, functions, or the prevalent social media platforms and the internet. Based on this observation, the organization appears to be deficient in implementing loyalty schemes for its dedicated clientele, which would offer them a range of financial and non-financial incentives.

Opportunities

As the company has a large number of customers who buy products, their activities also have an impact on the environment, so there is an opportunity for the company in the future to focus on environmentally friendly processing of products, including unnecessary packaging and plastics, to reduce its overall environmental impact. The company's emphasis on innovation and technology presents the potential for ongoing enhancement and advancement of artificial intelligence and virtual reality. These advancements hold significant promise for future applications, not only in the realm of gaming but also in professional settings. From a marketing perspective, the company can leverage the opportunity to prioritize customer-centricity and cultivate enduring relationships with them. This can be achieved through diverse sales promotions and enhancements to the website's transparency, which serves as a virtual storefront for electronic commerce.

Threats

The external environment poses various threats to the company, including legislative measures and unforeseen circumstances that may be difficult for the company to anticipate and prepare for. Given the company's extensive and diversified portfolio, which does not concentrate solely on a specific product segment, there is the possibility of insufficient customer interest in certain products, resulting in significant losses. While this may not necessarily result in the company's collapse, it may weaken its market position in the long run.

Table 2 SWOT analysis of Samsung marketing communication

Strengths	Importance	Score	Score vs importance	Total
Strong brand	0,5	5	2,5	6,9
Innovative technology	0,5	4	2	
Broad portfolio	0,3	4	1,2	
Research and development	0,3	4	1,2	
Weaknesses	**Importance**	**Score**	**Score vs importance**	**Total**
High price products	0,5	4	2	5,1
Public Relations	0,2	4	0,8	
Defects in design and quality	0,3	5	1,5	
Loyalty programs	0,2	4	0,8	
Opportunities	**Importance**	**Score**	**Score vs importance**	**Total**
Emphasis on the environment	0,5	5	2,5	6,9
Building long-term relationships	0,2	4	0,8	

Website improvements	0,2	4	0,8	6,9
Developing artificial intelligence	0,5	5	2,5	
Threats	**Importance**	**Score**	**Score vs importance**	**Total**
Legislation	0,5	4	2	5,1
Broad portfolio	0,3	4	1,2	
Crisis	0,3	3	0,9	
Market downturn	0,2	2	0,4	
Market downturn	0,2	2	0,4	
Diversified portfolio	0,2	2	0,4	
Pandemic	0,2	2	0,4	

XIAOMI

Strengths

The primary advantage of Xiaomi lies in the highly competitive pricing strategy implemented across the majority of its product offerings. One of the notable strengths of the company is its pricing strategy, which is often accompanied by a satisfactory level of quality. While the quality may not always be optimal, it is generally deemed acceptable in light of the competitive pricing. The organization has exhibited a relatively brief tenure in comparison to its industry counterparts yet has demonstrated substantial and swift expansion throughout its operational history. Consequently, the organization boasts an extensive range of products and endeavours to cater to the needs of the wider populace. The organization possesses a substantial social media following across various regions, which can effectively surmount linguistic obstacles for certain individuals and foster a closer relationship between the company and its customers, irrespective of the language they currently speak or comprehend.

Weaknesses

Beyond the markets of India and China, where the adoption of the product is most prevalent, the brand's global recognition is comparatively limited, and the general populace exhibits minimal familiarity with the brand. The company's product portfolio exhibits a weakness in terms of quality, as previously mentioned. However, it is noteworthy that the pricing remains fixed, which may imply that customers ought to anticipate a potential compromise in quality. Despite the contemporary inclination towards online shopping, individuals still exhibit a positive attitude towards visiting physical retail establishments to engage in product testing and evaluation. In light of this circumstance, it is noteworthy that Xiaomi's retail presence is limited to China and India, thus prompting the consideration of future expansion opportunities. The security of the products and system of the company has been subject to criticism. The occurrence of multiple instances of confidential user data breaches reflects unfavourably upon the company.

Opportunities

Xiaomi's innovation and technological capabilities have led to the incorporation of artificial intelligence and machine learning, which are also present in the aforementioned companies. With the surge in demand for the products, there exists a prospect to establish additional physical retail outlets, where patrons can experience the products first-hand and receive expert guidance from qualified personnel in the event of any queries regarding device selection. The identification of a company's weakness can potentially present an opportunity for future growth. In this regard, it is imperative for the company to prioritize the enhancement of product security and system integrity. This measure aims to prevent data breaches and enable customers to seamlessly transfer vital information across their devices. The sustained development of the enterprise is also associated with diversification into additional markets and acquiring a larger pool of prospective clientele globally.

Threats

Similar to the aforementioned technology behemoths, Xiaomi encounters analogous challenges. However, this corporation may be exposed to greater jeopardy due to its relatively shorter tenure in the market and a comparatively smaller customer base, in contrast to established entities such as Apple Inc. and Samsung. The aforementioned hazards could encompass statutory measures, emergency situations, economic recession, and worldwide epidemics. Nevertheless, the enterprise's competitive edge in this aspect could potentially stem from their prior experience in navigating through various unfavourable circumstances and emergencies throughout their tenure in the industry, thereby equipping them with the knowledge and readiness to tackle any future challenges that may arise.

Table 3 SWOT analysis of Xiaomi marketing communication

Strengths	Importance	Score	Score vs importance	Total
Low price	0,4	5	2	6,5
Fast growth	0,4	4	1,6	
Wide portfolio	0,3	4	1,2	
Social networks	0,5	4	2	
Weaknesses	**Importance**	**Score**	**Score vs importance**	**Total**
Little brand awareness (outside China and India)	0,3	5	1,5	6,2
Quality issues	0,5	4	2	
Small number of branches	0,3	4	1,2	
Low product and system security	0,3	5	1,5	
Opportunities	**Importance**	**Score**	**Score vs importance**	**Total**
Development of artificial intelligence	0,5	5	2,5	6,9
Construction of new branches	0,2	4	0,8	
Increasing product security	0,2	4	0,8	
System interconnection	0,1	3	0,3	
Threats	**Importance**	**Score**	**Score vs importance**	**Total**
Legislation	0,5	4	2	5,1
Broad portfolio	0,3	4	1,2	
Crisis	0,3	3	0,9	
Market downturn	0,2	2	0,4	
Pandemic	0,2	2	0,4	

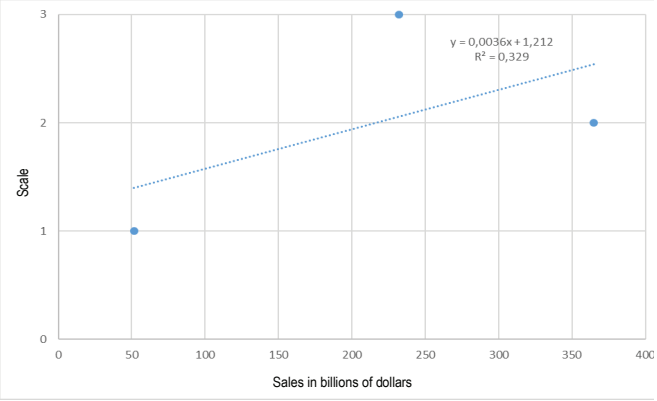

Figure 1: Correlation analysis

The data presented in Figure 1 exhibits a robust positive correlation, as evidenced by the calculated Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.57356721. This demonstrates that a company's sales performance is positively correlated with the effectiveness of its strategic planning and its ability to align with prevailing market trends. A limitation that arises is the restricted number of companies. To conduct a comprehensive correlation analysis that demonstrates the association between the utilized trends and sales, it would be imperative to incorporate a greater number of sizable technology companies. Notwithstanding the aforementioned limitations, it is feasible to employ correlation analysis in any given organization provided that pertinent data is available, and the Pearson's linear correlation coefficient r is computed, thereby substantiating the association between the variables under investigation.

The findings suggest that utilizing current technology trends in a precise and effective manner is crucial for companies to generate a favourable impact on prospective clients. A well-implemented trend strategy has the potential to yield favourable outcomes for a company in terms of future sales and impact on both financial and non-financial aspects.

DISCUSSIONS

By examining the trends of technology companies based on observations of social networks, websites and internal documents of Apple Inc., Samsung and Xiaomi, we can now un-answer the predetermined research questions.

RQ1: What are the three most prevalent contemporary trends among the technology firms that were surveyed?

Due to the changing environment, global market leaders say trends change constantly. Companies must monitor their competitors to avoid falling behind. In a

volatile corporate climate, long-term stasis is bad. This paper examined Apple Inc., Samsung, and Xiaomi's strategic directions and market trends using in-depth content analysis and observation. To understand these IT giants' development and competitiveness. Businesses are increasingly using machine learning and artificial intelligence. Nikitha and colleagues (2022) believe artificial intelligence will become more convenient. The car sector is using AI to assess driving conditions to reduce accidents. Self-driving cars, drones, and robots may soon make human intervention redundant. Machine learning and artificial intelligence breakthroughs may increase job prospects in several fields. Sustainability is a major trend in society's impact on the environment. Zhao and Huang (2022) claim that sustainability and environmental practices greatly impact firm success. Sustainable business techniques improve our climate due to pollution. Ullah et al. (2022) show that organizations are adopting ecologically sustainable practices, which boost revenue and sales. Sustainability was less important before. Large corporations must emphasize environmental effects due to climate change and environmental impact. People may improve themselves and the environment. The final trend is product variety and quality. Consumers are willing to pay more for a product that meets their durability, aesthetic, and usefulness needs. Dang et al. (2023) found that clients are increasingly interested in quality and continuous improvement, requiring quality investments to develop the firm. Ke, Shin, and Yuc (2022) found that design affects customers' purchasing decisions. A company's growth and competitiveness in a diverse market depend on the above variables.

RQ2: In what ways do these trends impact sales?

Business growth requires a well-defined plan and persistent adherence to key trends. A correlation study showed that organizations with better strategies and market trends are more likely to succeed and sell more. Babu et al. (2020) agree, stressing the need for trend monitoring and strategic adaptability to changing market conditions. These developments may boost a company's market performance and sales. Kaira, Vaschenko, and Vaschenko (2020) found that a solid plan boosts business competitiveness. They say such a plan can boost sales and give you a competitive edge. Given the large number of technology organizations and firms that use trends to gain visibility, the paper's narrow scope may be a drawback. Although the approaches may apply to all market-operating organizations, the paper is constrained by the tiny sample size. This paper could benefit technology corporations and other companies trying to adapt to current trends. Strategy specialists and small businesses need continuing trend education. Because such education improves theoretical understanding and helps organizations apply trends, it yields favorable results. Thus, excluding them from this category is improper. This project's ultimate benefit is that it can help students who like to combine academic and practical knowledge to better understand complex situations. The data collected can be used to broaden research into other technological problems. Future scholars may investigate non-technology firms. This paper used net profit and firm turnover for correlation analysis, which could be applied to all market-operating companies.

CONCLUSIONS

The significance of strategy cannot be underestimated, as it holds both theoretical and practical value for all enterprises functioning within the market. The implementation of effective strategies and strategic management practices can have a significant impact on a firm's competitive advantage and financial performance. The objective of this paper was to discern prevailing patterns in sales and to ascertain the predominant trends employed in the technology sector. The theoretical framework of this paper draws upon data extracted from scholarly articles to elucidate the concepts of quality, innovation, and access to contemporary market trends and their significance for contemporary businesses. Furthermore, the diverse contemporary tendencies in the realm of employee benefits were explained, which have the potential to confer a substantial edge on organizations in the coming years. During the practical component, an analysis was conducted on the internal data, websites, and social media platforms of the chosen companies. Three prominent technology corporations, namely Apple Inc., Samsung, and Xiaomi, were chosen for the project. It is noteworthy that the aforementioned three corporations are presently among the foremost manufacturers of technological apparatuses worldwide. Contemporary enterprises are actively engaging with prevailing market trends and endeavouring to satisfy the demands and desires of their clientele. The data utilized in this paper was sourced from the official websites, internal documents, and social media platforms of the companies under investigation. The findings of the paper indicate that enterprises that possess a well-defined and unambiguous strategy and effectively address contemporary trends and advancements exhibit elevated levels of revenue. Regarding market trends, Samsung is the leading company with the second-highest sales, while Apple Inc. and Xiaomi occupy the second and third positions, respectively. It is noteworthy that Xiaomi's tenure in the market is comparatively shorter than that of the other two entities under consideration. Organizations are endeavouring to capitalize on prevailing trends; however, only the most exceptional ones are implementing them in a marginally distinct and superior manner, thereby manifesting their efficacy in their financial outcomes. It is noteworthy that even the most exceptional corporation, such as Samsung, possesses prospects and limitations that could be addressed to further enhance its prosperity. Simultaneously, I would evaluate all the examined entities in a favourable light for their strategic approaches and innovative practices in comparison to other rival firms. Given the vast number of technology companies operating in the market, it is exceedingly difficult to sustain a foothold in this market segment. These companies have managed to remain in the market for an extended period, not solely due to their high-quality products but also

due to their adept public image management. It is imperative to consistently monitor market trends, not only in product and service development but also in marketing communication, as it has the potential to significantly enhance a company's sales and maximize its potential and brand recognition. The paper is subject to limitations due to the restricted number of subjects examined and the narrow focus solely on technology companies, thus indicating the need for additional research. The paper incorporates both theoretical and empirical data that can serve as a basis for future research and can be extrapolated to other companies operating in the market beyond the technology sector. The paper makes a significant contribution in both theoretical and practical domains, with implications that extend beyond technology companies to encompass all types of organizations. The findings obtained have broad applicability and the potential for practical implementation.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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ON STATE OF THE ART RESEARCH TRENDS IN ALBANIA REGARDING DIGITALIZATION. AUTOMATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is nowadays a key concern and major issue in scientific, political and decision making discussions in national and international organizations, enterprises and societies at all levels. Moreover, it has been emerged as a major multidisciplinary research field for all sciences including formal sciences, natural sciences, engineering and technology, applied sciences as well as economics and social sciences. On the other hand, the role of digitalization and automation as engines of the transformation of business, economies and societies to meet the currently defined sustainability goals is critical. Therefore, there is increased coupling between digitalization, automation and sustainability in terms of multidisciplinary research studies worldwide. In the herein research effort the goal is to analyze this emerging coupling by investigating state of the art research efforts in these multidisciplinary fields with regards to the Albania case. The investigation of such state of the art trends spans the years after 2015, since very few studies were conducted before, especially in Albania. But worldwide too, if it is considered that the term sustainable development was defined unofficially in 1972 and officially in 1987 and only during the last decade systematic research studies started appearing.

Keywords: *Sustainable development, digitalization, digital transformation, automation, research in Albania*

MAIN RESEARCH ISSUES IN DIGITALIZATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS

The term Digitalization refers to the process of converting information, data, processes, and activities into digital formats. It involves the adoption and integration of digital technologies in various aspects of life, including business, education, communication, science, finance, healthcare, governance and entertainment. Digitalization involves the use of computers, the internet, the cloud most prominently nowadays, software applications, and other digital tools to transform analog or manual processes into digital ones. In the context of business, digitalization often involves implementing digital tools and technologies to enhance operational processes, improve customer experiences, and enable data-driven decision-making. This may include the digitization of paper-based documents, the automation of manual tasks, the utilization of cloud computing and data analytics, the adoption of e-commerce platforms, and the development of digital marketing strategies. It enables new business models, enhances productivity and efficiency, fosters innovation and collaboration, and provides opportunities for new products and services.

On the other hand, the term Digital transformations refers to the comprehensive and strategic process through which organizations leverage digital technologies to fundamentally change their business models, operations, and customer experiences. It involves usage of digital technologies and integrating them into all aspects of an organization to drive significant improvements in efficiency, agility, innovation, and customer value. Digital transformation is not simply about implementing isolated digital tools or automating existing processes or transforming data to digital formats. It requires a holistic approach that rethinks and reinvents the way organizations, governments, enterprises operate, interacting with customers and deliver value. It involves a shift in mindset, culture, and processes to embrace digital capabilities and leverage data-driven insights for improved decision-making, management and governance. The field of Digitalization and Digital Transformations (Reis, J., Amorim, et al., (2018). Teichert, R. (2019) and Ziyadin, S., et al. (20200)), encompasses research mainly in the following topics:

Data Analytics and Business Intelligence:

Focusing on leveraging data to gain insights and drive data-driven decision-making through collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to understand customer behavior, optimize operations, and identify growth opportunities among many others.

Cybersecurity and Data Privacy:

Including research for ensuring the security and privacy of digital assets, data, and systems critical in the digital age. Focusing on implementing robust cybersecurity measures, developing data protection policies, and managing risks associated with digital technologies.

Digital Strategies development:

Focusing on aligning digital initiatives with business objectives, identifying opportunities for innovation, and defining the overall digital direction of organizations and businesses.

Digital Innovation and Research:

Exploring emerging technologies, conducting research, and identifying innovative digital solutions that can drive competitive advantage and business growth. Including areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, cloud computing, and data analytics.

Digital Customer Experience management:

Enhancing the customer experience through digital channels, focusing on understanding customer behaviours, preferences, and needs in the digital space and designing seamless and personalized digital experiences, including user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) design.

Digital Marketing and Communication:

Encompassing strategies and techniques for promoting products, services, and the organizational and businesses brands through digital channels. Including social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, digital advertising, and influencer marketing as well as personalized marketing research.

Digital Project Management:

Investigating effective project management to ensure successful implementation and delivery. Focusing on managing digital initiatives, coordinating cross-functional teams, defining project timelines and budgets, and ensuring the alignment of projects with organizational, enterprises and business goals.

Digital Talent and Skills Development:

Building digital capabilities within the organization, enterprise or business essential for successful digital transformation. Focusing on identifying digital skills gaps, implementing training and development programs, and attracting and retaining digital talent to support the organization's digital initiatives.

Process Automation and Optimization:

Conducting Research aiming at leveraging digital technologies to streamline and improve organizational and business processes. Focusing on identifying opportunities for automation, implementing robotic process automation (RPA), and optimizing workflows to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

Digital Change Management and Digital Adoption:

Focusing on Digital transformation requirements in managing change effectively and ensuring the adoption of digital technologies throughout the organizations and businesses. Conducting research on creating change management strategies, fostering a digital culture, and providing training and support to facilitate the adoption of digital tools and processes.

The herein research has been organized by adopting SCOPUS peer reviewed research database querying. The complex queries involved included the terms "Digitalization", "Digital Transformations", "Data Analytics" and "Business Intelligence", with publication year after 2015 and country of affiliation Albania. The conducted advanced search is limited only to English language journal articles, considering that the research efforts with such characteristics would have the best probabilities for resulting in higher impact in the state-of-the-art research and development worldwide.

Based on such a setup the results obtained with regards to the relevant state of the art research in Albania are shown in figures 1, 2, 3 and table 1 below.

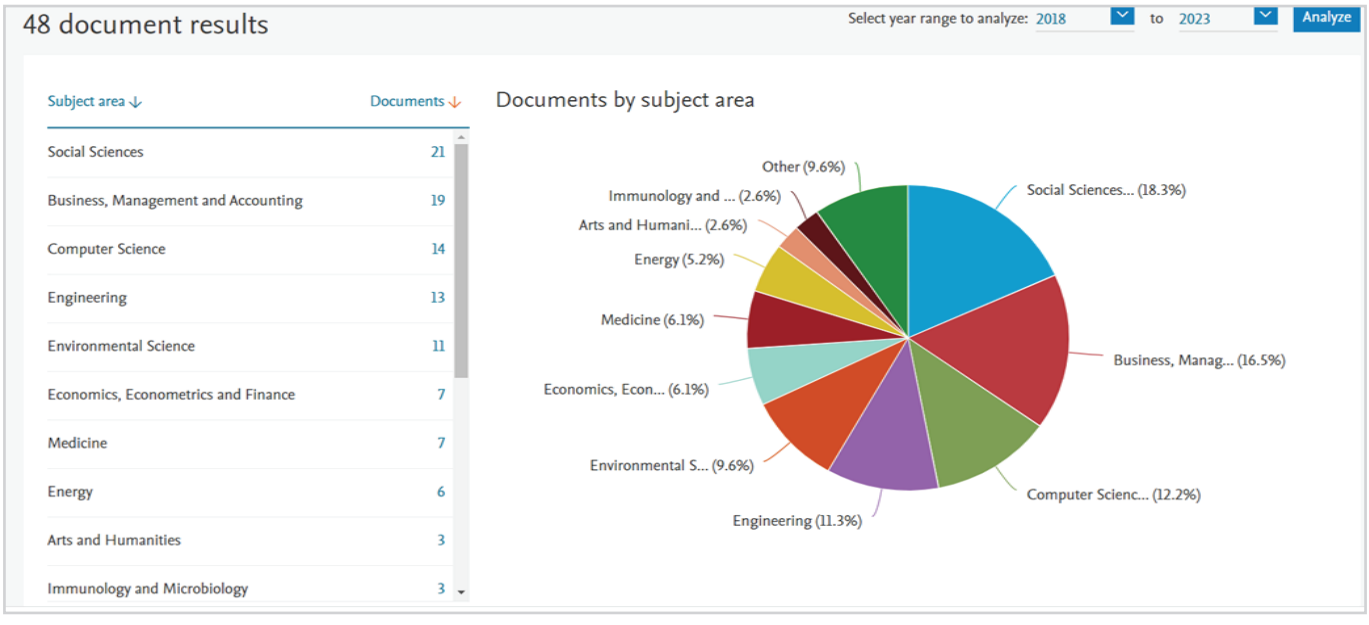

Figure 1- Subject areas in the field of Digitalization and Digital transformations in research in Albania since 2016.

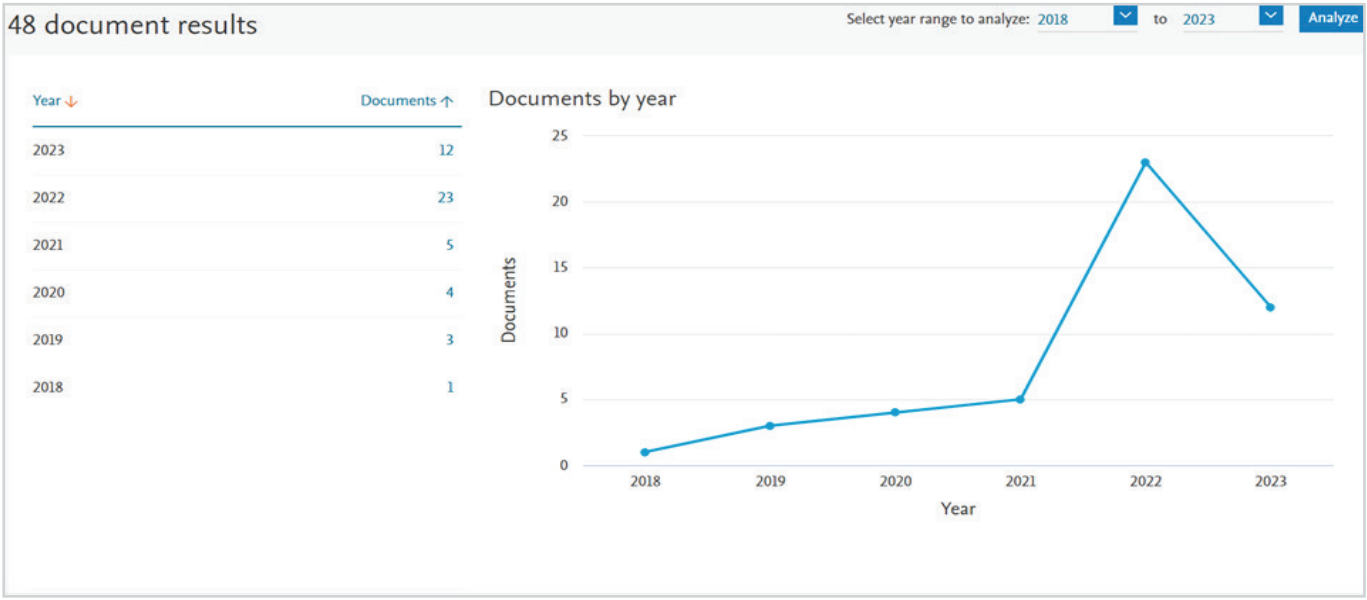

Figure 2- Evolution of research in the field of Digitalization and Digital transformations in Albania since 2016.

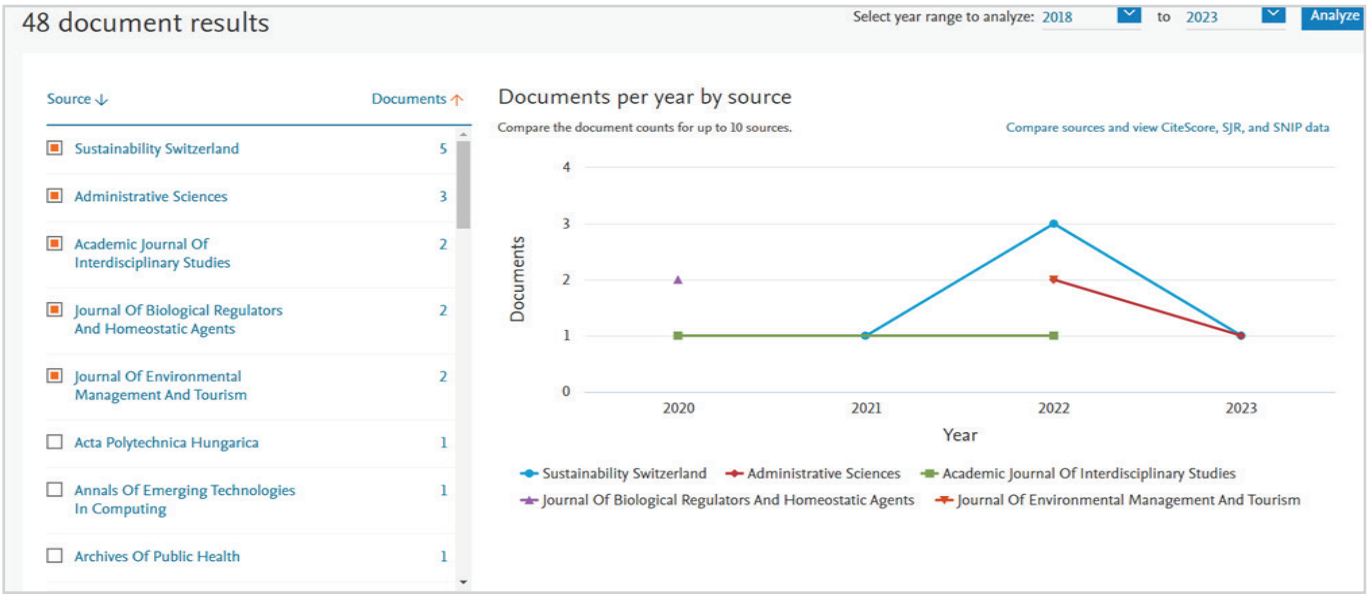

Figure 3- Main sources (journals) in the field of Digitalization and Digital transformations where the research in Albania since 2016 has been published.

Table 1 – Research topics in the field of Digitalization and Digital transformations in Albania in the first half of 2023.

Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Affiliations
Fernández A.; Gómez B.; Binjaku K.; Meçe E.K. et al.	Digital transformation initiatives in higher education institutions: A multivocal literature review	2023	Education and Information Technologies	Departament of Computer Engineering, Faculty of Information Technology, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Tirane, Albania
Rexhaj F.; Vilks A.; Sirenko N.; Dubinina M.; Melnyk O.; Bodnar O.	Participation of international organisations in solving the problems of the agricultural sector of Ukraine	2023	International Journal of Environmental Studies	Department of Plant Protection, Agricultural University in Tirana, Tirana, Albania

Cobianchi L.; Piccolo D.; Dal Mas F.; et al..;	Surgeons' perspectives on artificial intelligence to support clinical decision-making in trauma and emergency contexts: results from an international survey	2023	World Journal of Emergency Surgery	University Department of Surgery, University of Medicine, Tirana, Albania;
Çipi A.; Fernandes A.C.R.D.; Ferreira F.A.F.; Ferreira N.C.M.Q.F.; Meidutė- et al.	Detecting and developing new business opportunities in society 5.0 contexts: A socio-technical approach	2023	Technology in Society	University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali", Sheshi Pavarësia, Vlorë, 9401, Albania
Fait M.; Magni D.; Perano M.; Farina Briamonte M.; Sasso P.	Grassroot processes of knowledge sharing to build social innovation capabilities	2023	Journal of Knowledge Management	Scientific Research Center, Reald University College, Vlorë, Albania
Gjika I.; Pano N.	Human resource development AS a contributor to industry 4.0 implementation IN Albania	2023	Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries	Mediterranean University of Albania, Tirana, Albania
Jiang X.; Akbar A.; Hysa E.; Akbar M.	Environmental protection investment and enterprise innovation: evidence from Chinese listed companies	2023	Kybernetes	Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, Albania;
Vis C.; Schuurmans J.; Aouizerate B.; Craggs M.A.; Batterham P.; et al.	Effectiveness of Self-guided Tailored Implementation Strategies in Integrating and Embedding Internet-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Routine Mental Health Care: Results of a Multicenter Stepped-Wedge Cluster Rando-mized Trial	2023	Journal of Medical Internet Research	Institute of Public Health, Tirana, Albania; Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Medicine, Tirana, Albania;
Daskalakis G.; Pergialiotis V.; Domellöf M.; Ehrhardt H.; Di Renzo G.C.; Koç E.; et al.	European guidelines on perinatal care: corticosteroids for women at risk of preterm birth	2023	Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine	Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Maternity Koco Gliozheni Hospital, Tirana, Albania;
Perano M.; Cammarano A.; Varriale V.; Del Regno C.; Michelino F.; Caputo M.	Embracing supply chain digitalization and unphysicalization to enhance supply chain performance: a conceptual framework	2023	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	Department of Management, Reald University College, Vlorë, Albania
Ndou V.; Hysa E.; Maruccia Y.	A Methodological Framework for Developing a Smart-Tourism Destination in the Southeastern Adriatic–Ionian Area	2023	Sustainability (Switzerland)	Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania

Lulaj E.; Dragusha B.; Hysa E.	Investigating Accounting Factors through Audited Financial Statements in Businesses toward a Circular Economy: Why a Sustainable Profit through Qualified Staff and Investment in Technology?	2023	Administrative Sciences	Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environment, "Haxhi Zeka" University, Eliot Engel, Peja, Kosovo, Faculty of Economy, University of Shkodra, Jeronim De Rada, Sheshi "Dugajt e Reja", Shkoder, Albania; Dept. of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania

AUTOMATION AND SMART CITIES DEVELOPMENT

The fields of automation and smart cities development are two distinct but interconnected areas within the realm of digital transformation and technological advancement. More specifically, the automation field involves the use of technology to automate and optimize various tasks and processes traditionally performed by humans. It encompasses the application of technologies like robotics, mechatronics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and advanced algorithms to streamline operations, enhance productivity, and reduce human intervention. On the other hand, the Smart Cities Development field refers to the integration of technology and data-driven solutions to enhance the quality of life, sustainability, and efficiency of urban areas, together with imposing a dramatic improvement in quality of service considering all human activities and processes as well as with offering new important services to the citizens. This integrated field encompass research (Ivančić, L., et al. (2019). Dey, C et al. (2020), Tomor, Z.,et al. (2019), Arroub, et al. (2016)) mainly in the following topics:

Industrial Automation:

Involving the application of technologies such as robotics, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), and advanced control systems to optimize manufacturing processes and improve productivity. Encompassing areas like factory automation, process automation, and assembly line automation.

Robotic Systems:

Focusing on designing, developing, and deploying robots for various applications, including industrial manufacturing, logistics and warehousing, healthcare, agriculture, and service industries. Encompassing areas such as robot programming, motion control, and human-robot collaboration.

Control Systems:

Focusing on designing and implementing control systems, such as feedback control, supervisory control, and distributed control systems, to automate and optimize processes across industries.

Process Automation:

Focusing on research aiming to streamline and optimize complex processes in industries like chemical, oil and gas, pharmaceuticals, and food and beverage. Encompassing implementation of automation solutions, such as distributed control systems (DCS), programmable automation controllers (PAC), and process optimization algorithms, to enhance operational efficiency, quality, and safety.

Intelligent Systems:

Conducting research encompassing technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and data analytics to enable automation systems to learn, adapt, and make intelligent decisions. Focusing on developing algorithms, predictive models, and intelligent control systems that can improve automation performance and enable autonomous decision-making.

Mechatronics:

Conducting research combining mechanical engineering, electronics, control systems, and computer science to develop integrated systems with sensing, actuation, and control capabilities. Aiming at designing and implementing mechatronic systems that integrate mechanical components, electronics, and software to achieve industrial automation objectives.

Instrumentation and Sensors:

Designing automation systems, enabling the collection of real-time data and feedback for control and monitoring. Focusing on selecting, integrating, and calibrating sensors and instrumentation devices for automation applications, including temperature, pressure, flow, and level sensors.

Automation in Energy and Utilities:

Designing automation systems for energy generation, distribution, and management. Designing and implementing automation solutions for power plants, renewable energy systems, smart grids, water treatment plants, and waste management facilities to enhance efficiency, optimize resource usage, and improve sustainability.

Home and Building Automation:

Focusing on integrating automation technologies within residential and commercial buildings. Encompassing technologies such as smart lighting,

HVAC automation, security systems, energy management systems, and home automation platforms to enhance comfort, convenience, energy efficiency, and safety.

Process Optimization and Data Analytics:

Conduct research on leveraging data collected from automation systems to identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and opportunities for improvement. Focusing on using data analytics techniques, statistical analysis, and optimization algorithms to enhance automation performance, reduce costs, and optimize resource allocation.

Smart City Planning and Strategy:

Developing comprehensive methods. plans and strategies for transforming cities into smart cities. Encompassing identifying key areas for improvement, setting goals and objectives, and establishing roadmaps for implementing automation technologies and intelligent systems across various urban sectors.

Internet of Things (IoT) and Sensor Networks:

Focusing on research on deploying and managing networks of interconnected devices and sensors to collect real-time data on various urban parameters such as air quality, traffic flow, waste management, energy consumption, and infrastructure performance.

Urban Mobility and Transportation:

Conducting research on enhancing transportation systems and improving mobility within cities as key aspects of smart city initiatives. Designing and implementing intelligent transportation systems, designing and developing smart traffic management solutions, promoting sustainable transportation options, and integrating public transportation systems with digital platforms.

Energy Management and Efficiency:

Conducting research on emphasizing energy management and efficiency to reduce environmental impact and optimize resource usage. Focusing on implementing smart grids, energy monitoring systems, energy-efficient infrastructure, and renewable energy solutions to achieve sustainable and cost-effective energy consumption.

Waste Management and Recycling:

Conducting research on employing automation technologies to improve waste management processes and promote recycling. Designing and implementing smart waste collection systems, optimizing waste sorting and disposal, and utilizing data-driven approaches to minimize waste generation and enhance recycling efforts.

Smart Buildings and Infrastructure:

Focusing on integrating automation and intelligent systems into buildings and infrastructure to improve energy efficiency, safety, and comfort. Including technologies such as smart lighting, building automation systems, intelligent HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), as well as infrastructure monitoring systems.

Data Analytics and Urban Planning:

Utilizing data analytics and urban planning methodologies for informed decision-making in smart cities. Involving analyzing large volumes of data collected from various sources to gain insights into urban trends, optimize resource allocation, and support evidence-based urban planning and policy-making.

The herein research has been organized again by adopting SCOPUS peer reviewed research database querying. The complex queries involved included the terms “Robotics”, “Mechatronics”, “Smart cities” and “Sensors”, with publication year after 2015 and country of affiliation Albania., considering that the research efforts with such characteristics would have the best probabilities for resulting in higher impact in the state-of-the-art research and development worldwide. Based on such a setup the results obtained with regards to the relevant state of the art research in Albania are shown in figures 4, 5, 6 and table 2 below.

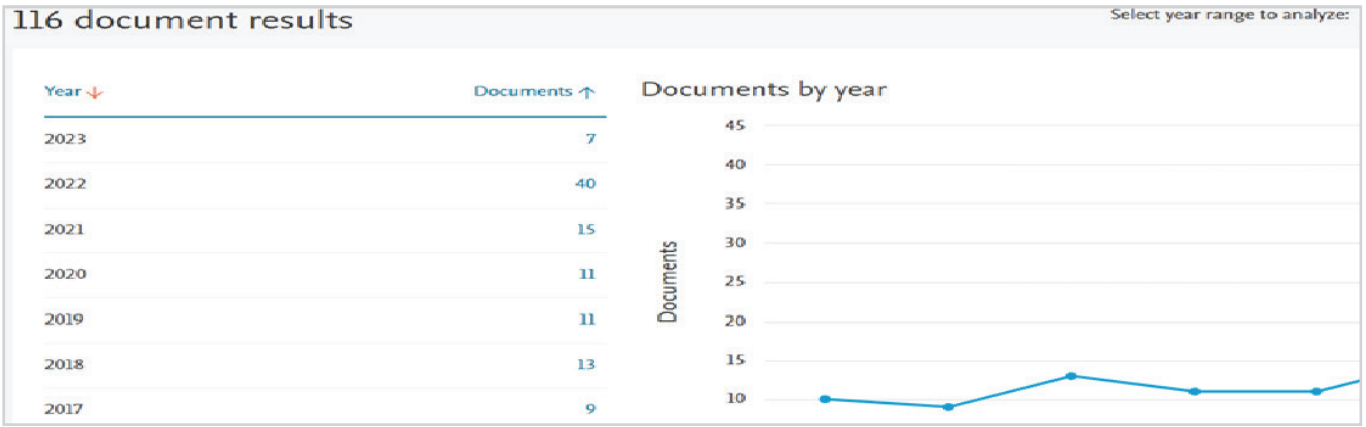

Figure 4- Subject areas in the fields of Automation and Smart Cities Development in research in Albania since 2016.

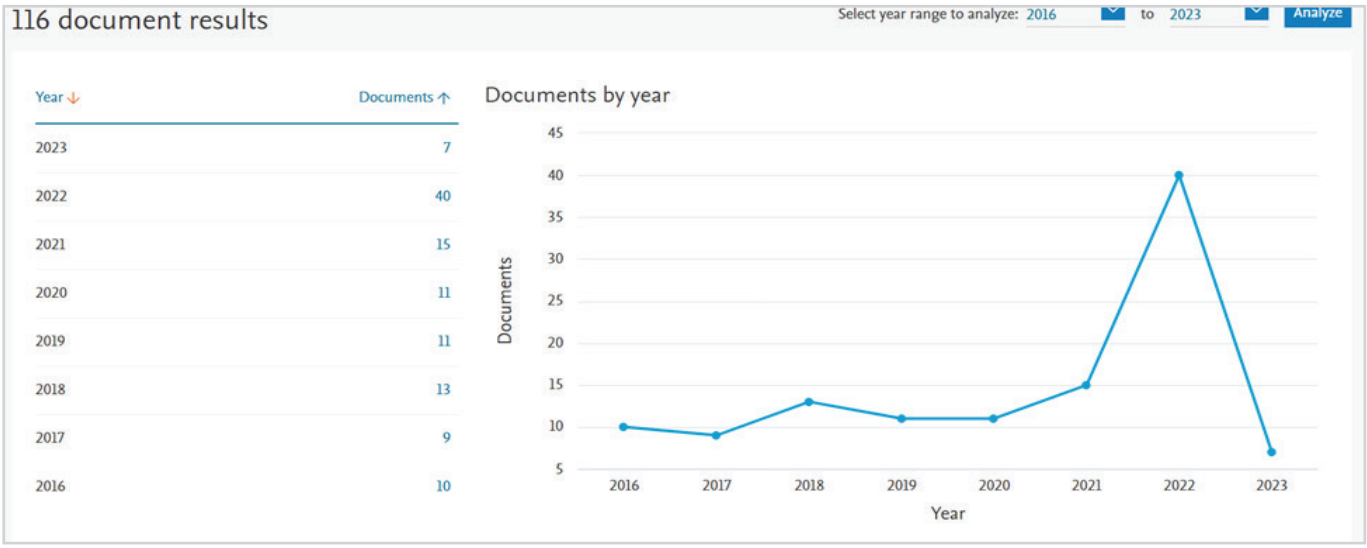

Figure 5- Evolution of research in the field of Automation and Smart Cities in Albania since 2016.

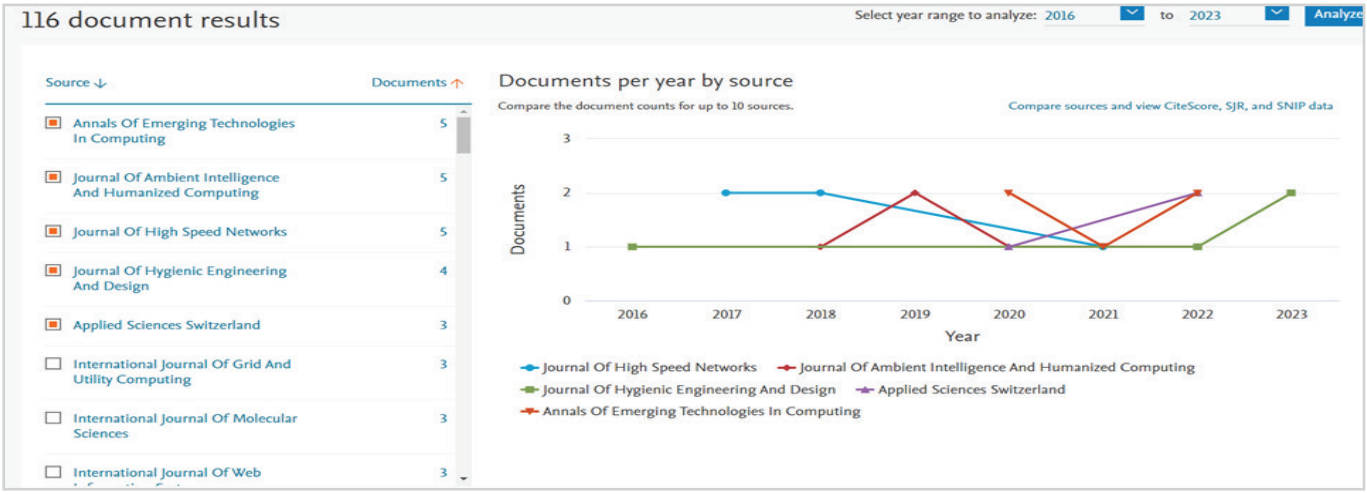

Figure 6- Main sources (journals) in the field of Automation and Smart Cities where the research in Albania since 2016 has been published.

Table 2 – Research topics in the field of Automation and Smart Cities Development in Albania in the first half of 2023.

Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Affiliations
Uka A.; Sitz G.O.	Electronic spectroscopy studies of Cu(100) following atomic hydrogen exposure	2023	Journal of Electron Spectroscopy and Related Phenomena	Faculty of Architecture and Engineering, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania; Department of Physics, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, 78712, TX, United States
Ndou V.; Hysa E.; Maruccia Y.	A Methodological Framework for Developing a Smart-Tourism Destination in the Southeastern Adriatic–Ionian Area	2023	Sustainability (Switzerland)	Department of Engineering for Innovation, University of Salento, Lecce, 73100, Italy; Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania

Broli N.; Vasjari M.; Cenolli S.; Vallja L.; Duka S.; Shehu A.	ELECTROCHEMICAL DETERMINATION OF ANTIBIOTICS AT NANO-MODIFIED CARBON PASTE ELECTRODE	2023	Journal of Hygienic Engineering and Design	Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Natural Science, University of Tirana, Bulevardi Zogu I, Tirana, 1001, Albania; Nano-Alb, Academy of Sciences of Albania, Fan Noli 7, Tirana, 1001, Albania
Lico L.; Enesi I.; Meka S.J.R.	An End-to-End Deep Learning System for Recommending Healthy Recipes Based on Food Images	2023	International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications	Electronic and Telecommunication Department, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania
Vasjari M.; Broli N.; Cenolli S.; Aliko V.; Vasjari L.; Hajdaraj G.; Faggio C.	DEVELOPMENT OF FERRITIN ELECTROCHEMICAL IMUNOSENSOR BASED ON CPE MODIFICATION	2023	Journal of Hygienic Engineering and Design	Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Natural Science, University of Tirana, Boulevard Zogu I nn, Tirana, 1001, Albania; Department of Biology, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Tirana, Boulevard Zogu I nn, Tirana, 1001, Albania; Nano-Alb, Academy, of Sciences of Albania, Fan Noli 7, Tirana, 1001, Albania; Clinic-Biochemical Laboratory-Ajel Diagnostic, Teodor Keko nn, Tirana, 1001, Albania;
Dervishi S.; Baçi N.	Early design evaluation of low-rise school building morphology on energy performance: Climatic contexts of Southeast Europe	2023	Energy	Department of Architecture, Epoka University, Rruga Tiranë-Rinas, Km 12, Tirana, 1039, Albania
Enesi I.; Kuqi A.	Performance Analysis for 3D Reconstruction Objects in Meshroom and Agisoft—A Comparative Study	2023	International journal of online and biomedical engineering	Department of Electronic and Telecommunication, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania

SUSTAINABILITY, CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND MATERIALS SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability, Circular Economy, and Materials Science for Sustainability are three interconnected and very closed fields that focus on addressing environmental and earth resource limitations challenges, promoting sustainable practices in all sectors of finance and society. More specifically,

Sustainability involves the responsible and optimized use of resources and the development of processes and practices that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses environmental, social, cultural and economic dimensions, commonly referred to as the pillars of sustainability.

In the context of sustainability, efforts are directed towards reducing carbon emissions, conserving natural resources, promoting renewable energy sources, managing waste effectively, and addressing social and equity issues, together with peace and conflict resolution. Sustainability aims to create a balance between human activities and the Earth's ecosystems to ensure a sustainable and liveable planet.

On the other hand, circular economy is an economic model that aims to maximize the value of resources and minimize waste generation. Unlike the traditional linear economy (take-make-dispose), which is based on a "take-make-waste" approach, the circular economy focuses on designing products, processes, and systems that prioritize resource efficiency, reuse, recycling, and especially regeneration in all aspects of economy and society.

In a circular economy, products are designed for durability, repairability, and recyclability. Materials are kept in use for as long as possible through strategies such as remanufacturing, refurbishing, and recycling. The circular economy also promotes the sharing economy, where products and resources are shared, leading to reduced consumption and waste generation. The circular economy contributes to sustainability by reducing the pressure on finite resources, minimizing environmental impacts, and creating economic opportunities through the development of new business models and value chains. Finally, Materials Science for Sustainability focuses on the development and application of materials and innovative smart materials that have a reduced environmental footprint and contribute to sustainable practices. It involves researching and designing materials with improved properties, durability, recyclability, and low energy consumption during production.

Materials scientists work towards developing eco-friendly materials, exploring alternatives to non-renewable resources, and improving manufacturing processes to minimize waste and emissions. This field encompasses the study of renewable materials, bio-based materials, nanomaterials, lightweight materials, sustainable manufacturing techniques and as above mentioned the design of novel smart materials. Materials Science for Sustainability plays a crucial role in various industries, including construction, energy, transportation, electronics, packaging, and consumer goods. It enables the development of sustainable and environmentally friendly products, reduces reliance on non-renewable resources, and supports the transition towards a more sustainable and regenerative future for the societies and humanity.

Interconnected these fields aim to promote sustainable practices and processes, reduce environmental footprints, and create a more resilient and equitable society. They address the challenges of resource scarcity, climate change, and waste management, seeking innovative solutions for a sustainable and prosperous future society worldwide.

This integral field encompasses research (Howarth, R. B. (1997), da Cunha Bezerra, M. C., et al. (2020), Arowoshegbe, A. O., et. al. (2016)) mainly in the following topics:

Environmental Science:

Assessing and addressing environmental impacts, conservation of natural resources, and mitigating climate change.

Renewable Energy:

Promoting and researching clean and renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal power.

Material Science for sustainability research:

Developing and advancing materials that are more environmentally friendly, energy-efficient, and socially responsible. Including exploring alternative materials, such as bioplastics, recycled plastics, sustainable textiles, and bio-based materials that can replace conventional, resource-intensive materials. Focusing, moreover, on Energy Efficiency, improving energy efficiency by developing materials with enhanced properties, such as high thermal insulation, lightweight construction materials, and advanced coatings for energy-saving applications. Additionally, focusing developing technologies and processes for efficient recycling and reuse of materials by designing materials that are recyclable, developing separation and sorting techniques, and creating innovative recycling methods to reduce waste and promote a circular economy. Sustainable Packaging, Life Cycle Assessment, Renewable Energy Materials, Water and Air Purification, Sustainable Construction Materials, Biomimicry and Bioinspired Materials issues are of special interest of this department.

Circular Economy:

Advancing the concept of reducing waste, recycling, and reusing materials to minimize resource consumption and waste generation.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation:

Developing strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems:

Promoting sustainable farming practices, food security, and reducing the environmental footprint of agriculture.

Water Management:

Ensuring sustainable use and management of water resources, addressing water scarcity, and improving water quality.

Sustainable Transportation:

Encouraging the use of low-carbon and efficient transportation modes, promoting electric vehicles, and improving public transportation systems.

Corporate Sustainability:

Assisting businesses in integrating sustainable practices into their operations, supply chains, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Sustainable Urban Planning:

Designing cities and communities to be environmentally friendly, socially inclusive, and economically vibrant.

Social Sustainability:

Fostering social equity, inclusivity, and community engagement in sustainable initiatives.

Sustainable Waste Management:

Implementing waste reduction strategies, recycling programs, and proper disposal of hazardous materials.

Biodiversity Conservation:

Protecting and restoring biodiversity through conservation efforts, habitat preservation, and sustainable land management.

The herein research has been organized again by adopting SCOPUS peer reviewed research database querying. The complex queries involved included the terms "Sustainability", "Circular Economy", and "Recycling", "Recycling Materials" with publication year after 2015 and country of affiliation Albania. The conducted advanced search is limited only to English language journal articles, The conducted advanced search is limited only to English language journal articles in Engineering and Material Science considering again that the research efforts with such characteristics would have the best probabilities for resulting in higher impact in the state-of-the-art research and development worldwide.

Based on such a setup the results obtained with regards to the relevant state of the art research in Albania are shown in figures 7, 8, 9 and table 3 below.

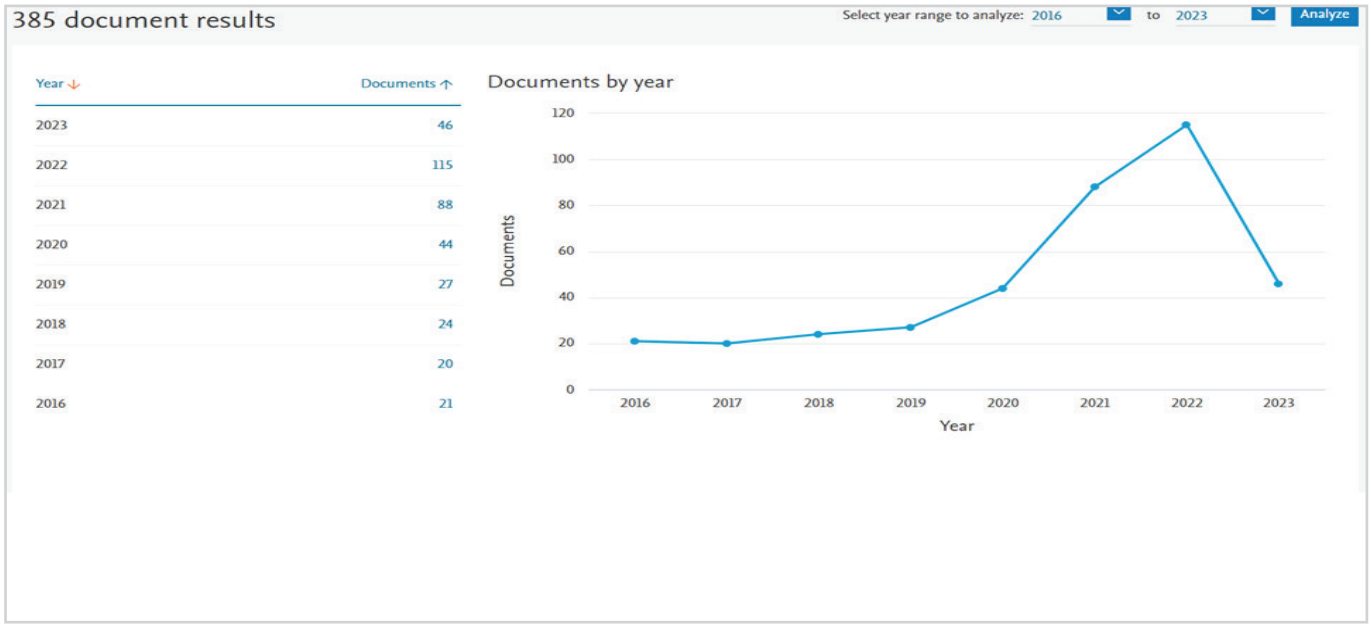

Figure 7- Subject areas in the fields of Sustainability, Circular Economy and Materials Science for Sustainability in research in Albania since 2016.

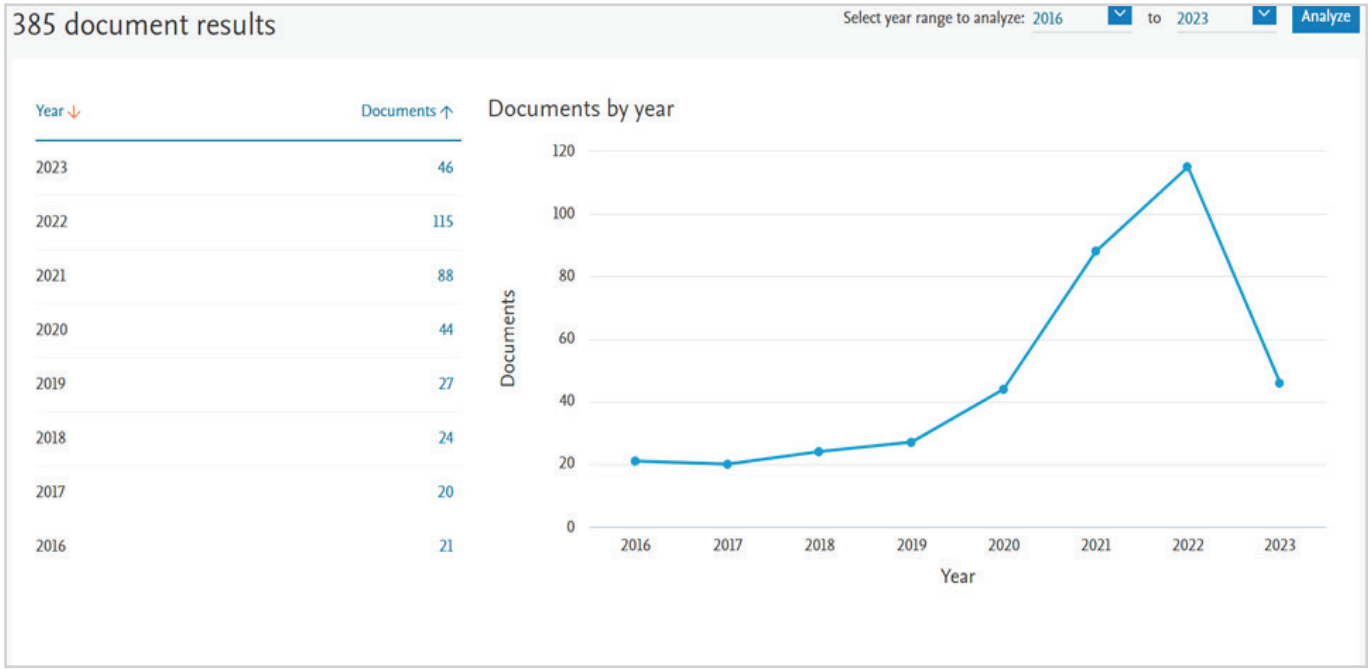

Figure 8- Evolution of research in the field of Sustainability, Circular Economy and Materials Science for Sustainability in Albania since 2016.

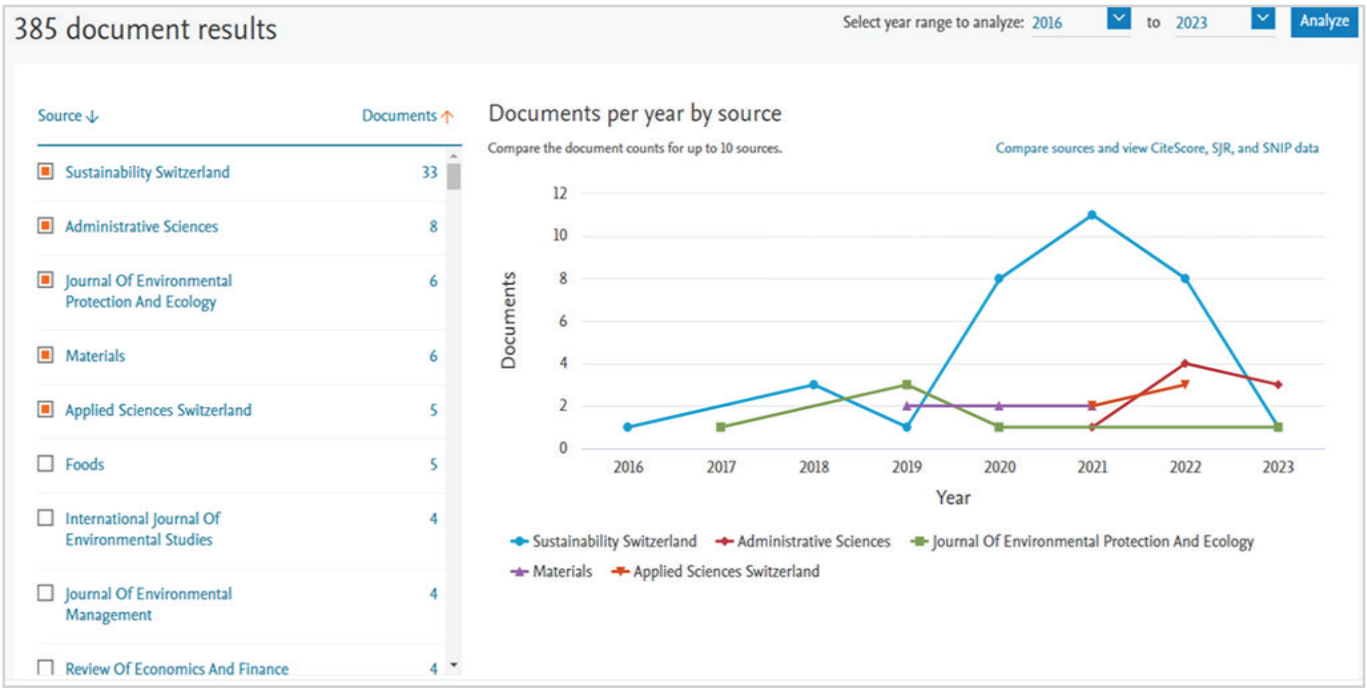

Figure 9 – Main sources (journals) in the field of Sustainability, Circular Economy and Materials Science for Sustainability where the research in Albania since 2016 has been published.

Table 3 – Research topics in the field of Sustainability, Circular Economy and Materials Science for Sustainability in Albania in the first half of 2023.

Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Affiliations
Miço H.; Cungu J.	Entrepreneurship Education, a Challenging Learning Process towards Entrepreneurial Competence in Education	2023	Administrative Sciences	Department of Law, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania; Department of Linguistics, University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani", Elbasan, 3001, Albania
Skura E.; Koto R.; Lika E.; Shahini S.; Sallaku F.	Comparative characteristics of plant protection against copper and sulphur influence; [Порівняльна характеристика засобів захисту рослин від впливу міді та сірки]	2023	Scientific Horizons	Agricultural University of Tirana, 1025, Paisi Vodica Str., Tirana, Albania
Yunitsyna A.; Shtepani E.	Investigating the socio-spatial relations of the built environment using the Space Syntax analysis – A case study of Tirana City	2023	Cities	Epoka University, rr. Tiranë-Rinas, Km 12, Tirana, 1039, Albania; Tirana Metropolitan University, rr. Sotir Kolea, Tirana, 1000, Albania
Çipi A.; Fernandes A.C.R.D.; Ferreira F.A.F.; Ferreira N.C.M.Q.F.; Meidutė-Kavaliauskienė I.	Detecting and developing new business opportunities in society 5.0 contexts: A socio-technical approach	2023	Technology in Society	University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali", Sheshi Pavarësia, Vlorë, 9401, Albania;
Fait M.; Magni D.; Perano M.; Farina Briamonte M.; Sasso P.	Grassroot processes of knowledge sharing to build social innovation capabilities	2023	Journal of Knowledge Management	Scientific Research Center, Reald University College, Vlorë, Albania

Kastrati Z.; Imran A.S.; Daudpota S.M.; Memon M.A.; Kastrati M.	Soaring Energy Prices: Understanding Public Engagement on Twitter Using Sentiment Analysis and Topic Modeling with Transformers	2023	IEEE Access	University of New York Tirana, Department of Computer Science, Tirana, 1001, Albania
Sinaj Z.; Ramosacaj M.; Kushta E.	Performance management assessment in agriculture organisations (using factorial parameters case of Albania); [Оцінка управління ефективністю в сільськогосподарських організаціях (з використанням факторних параметрів на прикладі Албанії)]	2023	Scientific Horizons	University “Ismail Qemali” Vlore, Kosova Str., Vlore, 9400, Albania
Shahu E.; Hoxha A.; Zhllima E.; Imami D.; Gjika I.	Factors influencing farmers’ willingness to participate in Farm to School programmes – The case of Albania	2023	Studies in Agricultural Economics	Department of Mathematics and Informatics, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania; Department of Finance and Accounting, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania; Department of Economy and Rural Development Policies, Agricultural University of Tirana, Rruga Paisi Vodica 1025, Tirana, Albania;
Draçi P.; Demi A.	RESIDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT	2023	Corporate and Business Strategy Review	Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Durrës, Albania
Puci J.; Draci P.; Demi A.; Merja Z.	An assessment of bank profitability: Evidence from Albania	2023	International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting	Canadian Institute of Technology, Tirana, Albania; University “Aleksandër Moisiu” Durrës, Albania
Di Renzo M.; Letizia F.; Di Martino C.; Karaulli J.; Kongoli R.; Testa B.; Avino P.; Guerriero E.; Albanese G.; Monaco M.; Iorizzo M.	Natural Fiano Wines Fermented in Stainless Steel Tanks, Oak Barrels, and Earthenware Amphora	2023	Processes	Department of Agriculture, Environmental and Food Sciences, University of Molise, Campobasso, 86100, Italy; Food and Research Center, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, 1000, Albania; Agri-Food Technological Department, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, 1000, Albania;
Nuez I.; Giovos I.; Tiralongo F.; Penadés-Suay J.; Cetkovic I.; Di Lorenzo M.; Kleitou P.; Bakiu R.; Bradai M.N.; Almabruk S.A.A.; Spyridopoulou R.N.A.; Sabbio A.; Gazo M.	Assessing the current status of Hexanchus griseus in the Mediterranean Sea using local ecological knowledge	2023	Marine Policy	Albanian Center for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, Tirane, Albania. Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirane, Albania;

Hysa E.; Foote R.	Improving operational - developmental connections: foregrounding an alignment - dealignment - realignment perspective	2023	International Journal of Education Economics and Development	Department of Economics, Epoka University, Albania; Caribbean College of the Bible International, Trinidad and Tobago
Kelmendi M.; Aliu M.	Research of the Ecological Status in the Waters of the River Sitnica-Kosovo	2023	International Journal of Environmental Science and Development	Faculty of Food Technology, The University "Isa Boletini" in Mitrovica, Albania
Balestra A.; Caruso R.	Vaccines between war and market	2023	International Area Studies Review	Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy; Catholic University 'Our Lady of Good Counsel', Albania
Vallja L.; Duka S.; Shehu A.; Broli N.; Vasjari M.	CHARACTERIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF PHOSPHOROUS IN SEDIMENTS. CASE STUDY: KUNE VAINI LAGOON SYSTEM (LEZHA, ALBANIA)	2023	Journal of Hygienic Engineering and Design	Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Tirana, Boulevard Zogu 1, Tirana, 1001, Albania
Pazaj E.; Mane A.K.	Factors Affecting the Olive Production Chain in Albania	2023	WSEAS Transactions on Business and Economics	Faculty of Economy and Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania
Vis C.; Schuurmans J.; Aouizerate B.; Craggs M.A.; Batterham P.; et al.	Effectiveness of Self-guided Tailored Implementation Strategies in Integrating and Embedding Internet-Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Routine Mental Health Care: Results of a Multicenter Stepped-Wedge Cluster Randomized Trial	2023	Journal of Medical Internet Research	Institute of Public Health, Tirana, Albania; Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Medicine, Tirana, Albania;
Prendi L.; Murrja A.	How Are the Balkan Countries Progressing Toward Green Economy?	2023	Review of Economics and Finance	Faculty of Business, "Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durres, Albania; Faculty of Economics and Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania
Perano M.; Cammarano A.; Varriale V.; Del Regno C.; Michelino F.; Caputo M.	Embracing supply chain digitalization and unphysicalization to enhance supply chain performance: a conceptual framework	2023	International Journal of Physical Distribution and Logistics Management	Department of Management, Reald University College, Vlorë, Albania
Ndou V.; Hysa E.; Maruccia Y.	A Methodological Framework for Developing a Smart-Tourism Destination in the Southeastern Adriatic–Ionian Area	2023	Sustainability (Switzerland)	Department of Engineering for Innovation, University of Salento, Lecce, 73100, Italy; Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania
Drishti E.; Carmichael F.	Dead-end jobs or stepping-stones? Precarious work in Albania	2023	Personnel Review	Department of Business Administration, University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi", Shkoder, Albania;
Kicaj H.; Polukarov Y.; Prakhovnik N.; Polukarov O.; Kachynska N.	How war in Ukraine is affecting the climate	2023	International Journal of Environmental Studies	Department of Biology, Section of Environmental Biology, University Ismail Qemali, Vlorë, Albania;

Hoxhaj R.; Miti F.	The impact of COVID-19 on work from home of ethnic groups in the USA: evidence from time-use data	2023	International Journal of Manpower	Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Bussiness Administration, Ghent University, Gent, Belgium; Department of Economics, University Ismail Qemali of Vlora, Vlore, Albania
Hallunovi A.	FINANCIAL RESULTS VS. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCOUNTING PRACTICES	2023	Journal of Governance and Regulation	Finance Accounting Department, Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Durrës, Albania
Fabbrizzi E.; Giakoumi S.; De Leo F.; Tamburello L.; et al.	The challenge of setting restoration targets for macroalgal forests under climate changes	2023	Journal of Environmental Management	University of Vlora “Ismail Qemali”, Sheshi Pavaresia, Vlore, Albania;
Gjika I.; Pano N.	Human resource development AS a contributor to industry 4.0 implementation IN Albania	2023	Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries	Mediterranean University of Albania, Tirana, Albania
Ahmetaj B.; Kruja A.D.; Hysa E.	Women Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Perspectives of an Emerging Economy	2023	Administrative Sciences	Department of Business Administration, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania; Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania
Dorri A.; Alcani M.; Dhoska K.; Bako M.	COMPUTATIONAL SIMULATION OF HEAT TRANSFER THROUGH FINS OF DIFFERENT SHAPES IN AN AIR-COOLED INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINE	2023	International Journal on Technical and Physical Problems of Engineering	Department of Energy, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania; Department of Production and Management, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania
Ivanovic V.; Lami E.; Imami D.	Political Budget Cycles in Early Versus Regular Elections: The Case of Serbia	2023	Comparative Economic Studies	Ministry of Finance and Economy of Albania, Tirana, Albania; Faculty of Economics and Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania
Jiang X.; Akbar A.; Hysa E.; Akbar M.	Environmental protection investment and enterprise innovation: evidence from Chinese listed companies	2023	Kybernetes	Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, Albania;
Shahini E.; Luhovyi S.; Kalynychenko H.; Starodubets O.; Trybrat R.	Rational use of oilseed waste to increase dairy productivity	2023	International Journal of Environmental Studies	Economic Science Department, Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Durres, Albania;
Mazaris A.D.; Dimitriadis C.; Papazekou M.; et al.	Priorities for Mediterranean marine turtle conservation and management in the face of climate change	2023	Journal of Environmental Management	Wildlife and Health Research Center, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania; University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Shkoder, Albania;

Januzi V.; Sena L.; Bytyqi N.	DETERMINATION OF OPTIMAL CONCENTRATION OF ORGANIC SELENIUM ON EGG PRODUCTION IN LAYING HENS	2023	Journal of Hygienic Engineering and Design	Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, Agricultural University of Tirana, Kodër Kamëz, Tirana, 1029, Albania; Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary, University of Pristina, Boulevard "Bill Clinton" nn, Pristina, Kosovo, 10000
Ismail M.M.; Mostafa N.N.; Kazia E.; Elhenawy I.	Machine learning for False Information Detection in Social Internet of Things	2023	Fusion: Practice and Applications	Faculty of Computers and Informatics, Zagazig University, Sharqiyah, Zagazig, 44519, Egypt; Department of Applied and Computer Sciences, Barleti University, Albania
Puci J.; Demi A.; Kadiu A.	IMPACT OF MACROECONOMIC VARIABLES ON THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR	2023	Corporate and Business Strategy Review	Canadian Institute of Technology, Kompleksi Xhura, Tirana, Albania; University "Aleksandër Moisiu", Spitallë, Durrës, Albania
Rexhaj F.; Vilks A.; Sirenko N.; Dubinina M.; Melnyk O.; Bodnar O.	Participation of international organisations in solving the problems of the agricultural sector of Ukraine	2023	International Journal of Environmental Studies	Department of Plant Protection, Agricultural University in Tirana, Tirana, Albania;
Angjeli G.; Pano N.; Malollari I.	ROLE OF CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NEW ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS WITHIN THE ALBANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	2023	Journal of Environmental Protection and Ecology	Mediterranean University of Albania, Tirana, Albania; University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania
Lahi B.; Nurja I.	Economic and Psychological Well-being in Pandemic Times	2023	WSEAS Transactions on Business and Economics	Department of Psychology, University of New York Tirana, Albania; Department of Economic and Finance, University of New York Tirana, Albania
Berxolli A.; Potryvaieva N.; Dovgal O.; Kuzoma V.; Pavliuk S.	Innovation in Ukrainian agriculture to mitigate the impact of invasion	2023	International Journal of Environmental Studies	Department of Plant Protection, Agricultural University in Tirana, Tirana, Albania
Kalaja R.; Kurti S.; Myshketa R.	Service quality and patient satisfaction with private health care services in Albania	2023	International Journal of Public Health Science	Department of Medical Technical Sciences, Faculty of Professional Studies, University "Aleksandër Moisiu", Durrës, Albania; Department of management, Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, Tirana, Albania; Department of Management, University "Aleksandër Moisiu", Durrës, Albania
Ramallari A.; Velaj E.	The Impact of Education in Economy. The Case of Albania	2023	Review of Economics and Finance	Economics Department, Business Faculty, University Aleksandër Moisiu, Durrës, Albania
Ramallari A.; Merko F.	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFLATION AND GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT: ALBANIA CASE	2023	Corporate Law and Governance Review	Faculty of Business, Department of Economic Sciences, University Aleksandër Moisiu, Durrës, Albania

Marko O.; Gjipalaj J.; Profka D.; Shkodrani N.	Soil erosion estimation using Erosion Potential Method in the Vjosa River Basin, Albania	2023	AIMS Environmental Science	Department of Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Rruga Muhamet Gjollesha Nr. 54, Tirana, 1023, Albania; Department of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Polytechnic University of Tirana, Rruga Muhamet Gjollesha Nr. 54, Tirana, 1023, Albania
Malka L.; Bidaj F.; Kuriqi A.; Jaku A.; Roçi R.; Gebremedhin A.	Energy system analysis with a focus on future energy demand projections: The case of Norway	2023	Energy	Department of Energy Polytechnic University of Tirana, Sheshi “Nene Tereza,” nr. 4, Tirane, Albania;
Lulaj E.; Dragusha B.; Hysa E.	Investigating Accounting Factors through Audited Financial Statements in Businesses toward a Circular Economy: Why a Sustainable Profit through Qualified Staff and Investment in Technology?	2023	Administrative Sciences	Faculty of Economy, University of Shkodra, Jeronim De Rada, Sheshi “Dugajt e Reja”, Shkoder, 4001, Albania; Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania
Ziarno M.; Zaręba D.; Dryzek W.; Hassaliu R.; Florowski T.	Effect of the Addition of Soy Beverage and Propionic Bacteria on Selected Quality Characteristics of Cow’s Milk Yoghurt Products	2022	Applied Sciences (Switzerland)	; Faculty of Biotechnology and Food, Agricultural University of Tirana, Tirana, 1029, Albania;

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Sustainable development and economic growth are two intertwined concepts that aim to promote a prosperous and equitable future while preserving the environment and natural resources for future generations. While economic growth refers to an increase in the production and consumption of goods and services within an economy, sustainable development emphasizes a holistic approach that integrates economic, social, governmental and environmental considerations.

This field encompass research (Alvino, F., et.al. (2021), Dos Santos, P. H., et.al.. (2019), Halkos, G., et al.) mainly in the following topics:

Sustainable Business Development and Economic Growth:

All aspects of business modelling, planning and development as well as all aspects of Economics (Macro and Micro), Finance and Economic Growth incorporating all traditional and modern financing tools too.

Sustainable Development:

Planning and implementing strategies for economic growth that considers social, environmental, and economic factors, while ensuring long-term sustainability.

Sustainable Finance and Investment:

Promoting mainly ESG Integration. This involves incorporating ESG criteria into investment analysis and decision-making processes. It includes assessing companies’ ESG performance, analyzing risks and opportunities associated with sustainability factors, and integrating this information into investment strategies. Moreover, promoting Impact Investing, focusing on generating measurable social and environmental benefits alongside financial returns. It involves directing investments towards projects, companies, or funds that aim to address specific sustainability challenges, such as clean energy, affordable housing, or access to healthcare. Additionally, will promote research on Green Finance, referring to financial products and services that specifically support environmentally friendly projects and initiatives. This field includes green bonds, green loans, and green investment funds, which direct capital towards activities with positive environmental impacts, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable infrastructure. These fields are interconnected and evolving as sustainability becomes increasingly integrated into the financial sector. Organizations and professionals in sustainable finance and investment work towards aligning financial decisions with sustainability goals, contributing to a more sustainable and resilient global economy. These are major aspects that will be considered in the research efforts of the proposed department.

Green Economy:

Promoting economic growth while minimizing environmental impacts, focusing on sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, waste management, and clean technologies to foster sustainable economic development.

Responsible Business Practices:

Promoting responsible business practices, that entails encouraging corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethical supply chains, fair labor practices, and sustainable business models. CSR reporting, stakeholder engagement, human rights, and social impact assessments are included in the interests of the department.

Sustainable Tourism:

Focusing on promoting tourism that minimizes negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts while maximizing economic benefits for local communities. Ecotourism, community-based tourism, sustainable destination management, and responsible tourism practices are included in the interests of the department.

Social Entrepreneurship:

Focusing on addressing social and environmental challenges. Social enterprise development, impact investing, and business models that integrate social and environmental considerations into economic activities are included in the interests of the department.

Financial Inclusion:

Focusing on ensuring access to affordable financial services for all individuals, including marginalized and underserved populations. Microfinance, inclusive banking, digital financial services, and financial literacy programs are included in the interests of the department.

Green Jobs and Skills Development:

Focusing on developing skills and training programs to support the transition to a green economy, such as renewable energy technicians, sustainable agriculture experts, and environmental consultants.

Sustainable Development Policy and Planning:

Focusing on designing and implementing policies and plans that integrate sustainable development principles into national and local decision-making processes. Sustainable development goal (SDG) planning, sustainable development indicators, and policy frameworks for sustainable economic growth are included in the interests of the department.

The herein research has been organized again by adopting SCOPUS peer reviewed research database querying. The complex queries involved included the terms " Sustainable Development", " Economic Growth", and " Sustainable Growth " with publication year after 2015 and country of affiliation Albania. The conducted advanced search is limited only to English language journal articles considering again that the research efforts with such characteristics would have the best probabilities for resulting in higher impact in the state-of-the-art research and development worldwide.

Based on such a setup the results obtained with regards to the relevant state of the art research in Albania are shown in figures 10, 11, 12 and table 4 below.

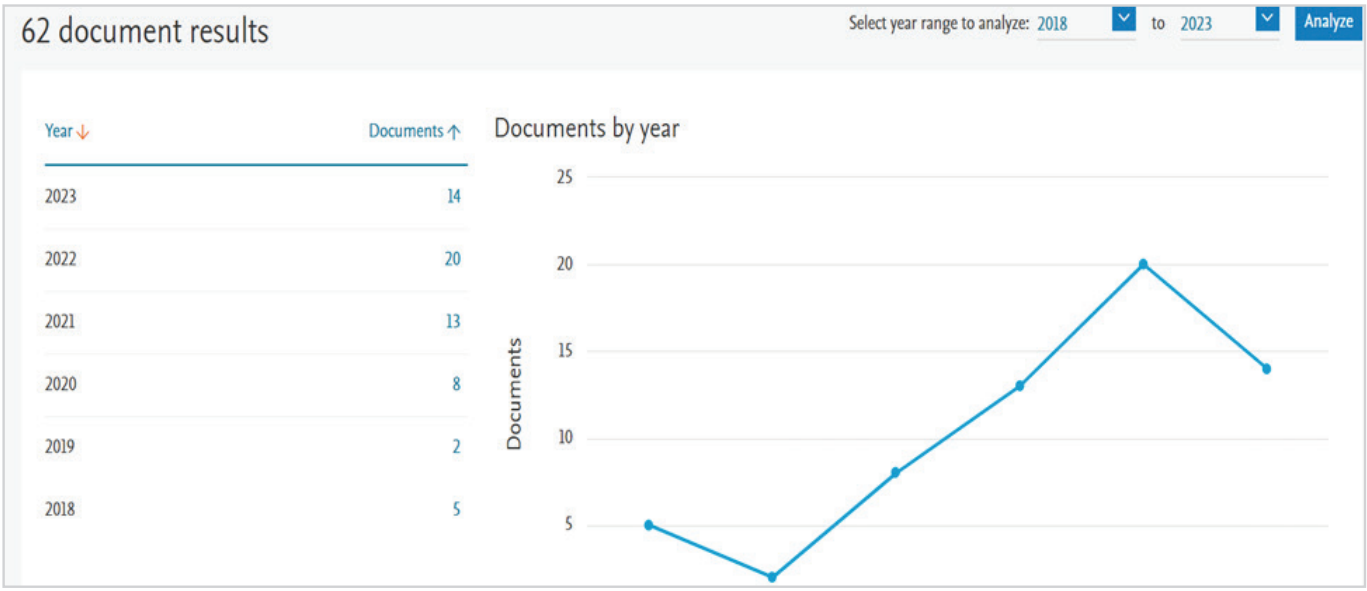

Figure 10- Subject areas in the fields of Sustainable Development and Economic Growth in research in Albania since 2016

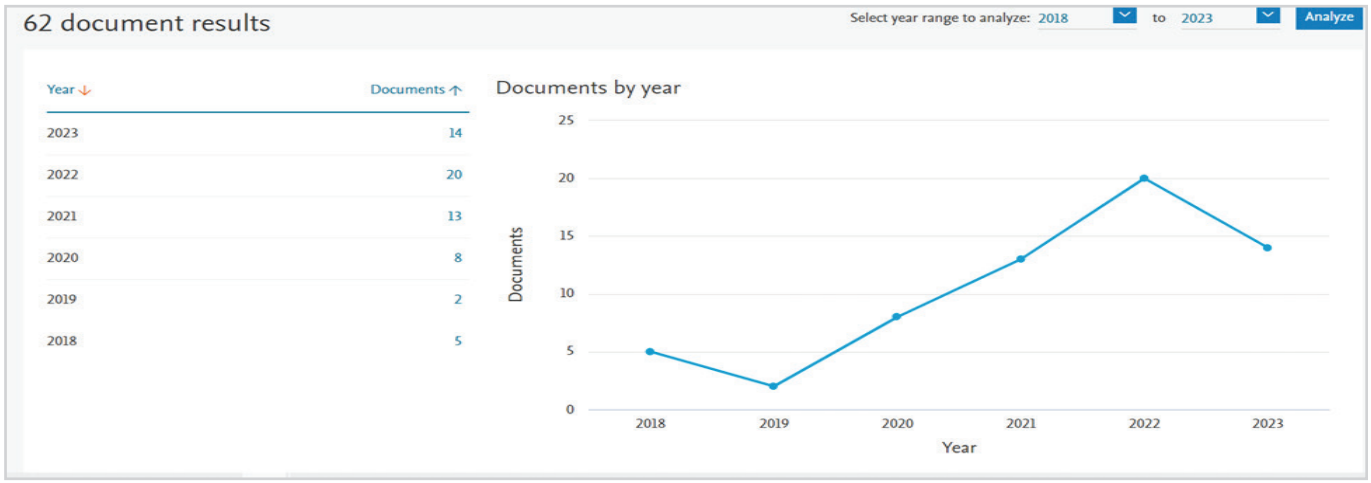

Figure 11- Evolution of research in the field of Sustainable Development and Economic Growth in Albania since 2016

Figure 12- Main sources (journals) in the field of Sustainable Development and Economic Growth where the research in Albania since 2016 has been published.

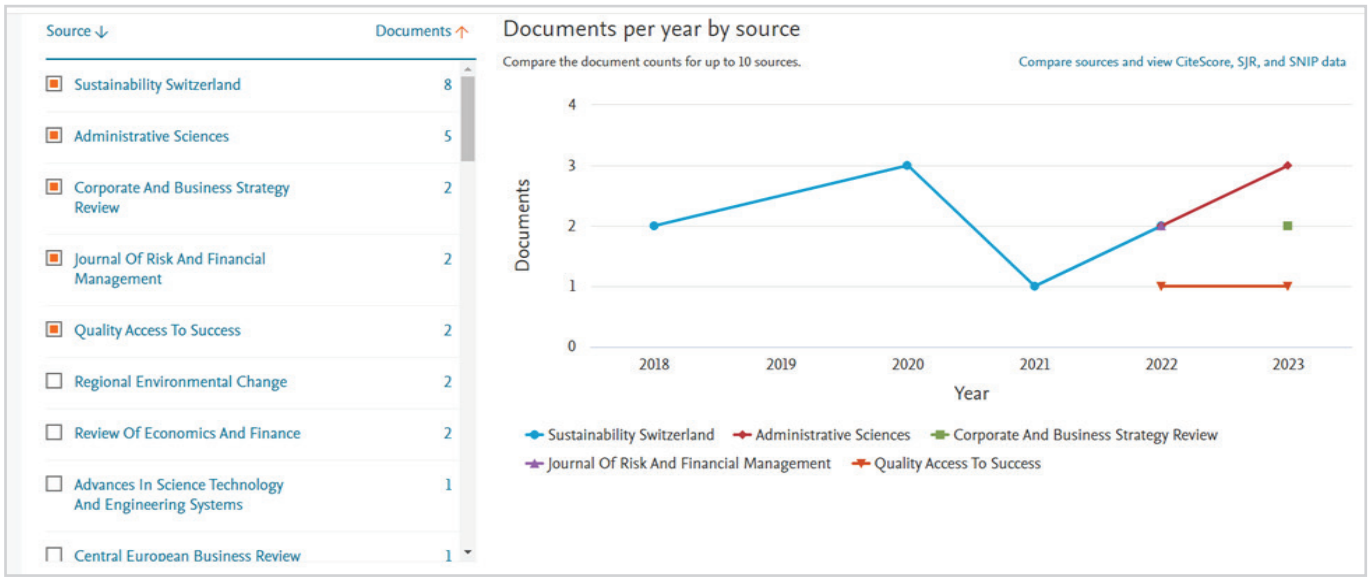

Table 4 – Research topics in the field of Sustainable Development and Economic Growth in Albania in the first half of 2023.

Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Affiliations
Xhindi N., Xhindi T.	The Policy of Urbanization Growth and Its Effects in the Albanian Economy in 1984–2020 [Polityka wzrostu urbanizacji i jej skutki w gospodarce Albanii w latach 1984–2020]	2023	Studia Iuridica Lublinensia	Mediterranean University of Albania, Albania; European University of Tirana, Albania
Taysum A., Hysa F.	Typology of Epistemologies for Democratising Knowledge and Policy Benefits for All Mainstreamed by Doctoral-Study	2023	European Journal of Educational Research	European Commission Expert, United Kingdom; University College Dardania Prishtina, KOSOVA, University of Elbasan "Aleksander Xhuvani", Albania

Shahini E., Luhovyi S., Kalynychenko H., Starodubets O., Trybrat R.	Rational use of oilseed waste to increase dairy productivity	2023	International Journal of Environmental Studies	Economic Science Department, Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës, Durres, Albania;
Ramallari A., Merko F.	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INFLATION AND GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT: ALBANIA CASE	2023	Corporate Law and Governance Review	Faculty of Business, Department of Economic Sciences, University Aleksandër Moisiu, Durrës, Albania
Puci J., Demi A., Kadiu A.	IMPACT OF MACROECONOMIC VARIABLES ON THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR	2023	Corporate and Business Strategy Review	Canadian Institute of Technology, Kompleksi Xhura, Tirana, Albania; University “Aleksandër Moisiu”, Spitallë, Durrës, Albania
Prendi L., Murrja A.	How Are the Balkan Countries Progressing Toward Green Economy?	2023	Review of Economics and Finance	Faculty of Business, "Aleksander Moisiu" University, Durres, Albania; Faculty of Economics and Agribusiness, Agricultural University of Tirana, Albania
Miço H., Cungu J.	Entrepreneurship Education, a Challenging Learning Process towards Entrepreneurial Competence in Education	2023	Administrative Sciences	Department of Law, Epoka University, Tirana, 1032, Albania; Department of Linguistics, University of Elbasan “Aleksandër Xhuvani”, Elbasan, 3001, Albania
Merko F., Habili M.	IMPACT OF INTEREST RATE, EXCHANGE RATE, AND INFLATION ON COMMERCIAL BANKS’ PERFORMANCE	2023	Corporate and Business Strategy Review	Economics Department, Business Faculty, University “Aleksandër Moisiu”, Durres, Albania; Department of Marketing Management, Tirana Business University College, Tirana, Albania
Lulaj E., Dragusha B., Hysa E.	Investigating Accounting Factors through Audited Financial Statements in Businesses toward a Circular Economy: Why a Sustainable Profit through Qualified Staff and Investment in Technology?	2023	Administrative Sciences	Faculty of Management in Tourism, Hospitality and Environment, “Haxhi Zeka” University, Eliot Engel, Peja, Kosovo, Faculty of Economy, University of Shkodra, Jeronim De Rada, Sheshi “Dugajt e Reja”, Shkoder, 4001, Albania; Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, Albania
Lubonja O., Hakrama K.	The Connection Between Urbanization, Energy Consumption, Foreign Direct Investments and Their Impact on The Environmental in Albania	2023	Quality - Access to Success	European University of Tirana, Department of Engineering and Architecture, "Xhanfize Keko", Nd 56, Tirana, Albania
Jiang X., Akbar A., Hysa E., Akbar M.	Environmental protection investment and enterprise innovation: evidence from Chinese listed companies	2023	Kybernetes	Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, Albania;

Hoxha V., Hasani I.	Decision-making biases in property investments in Prishtina, Kosovo	2023	Journal of Property Investment and Finance	Department of Real Estate, College ESLG, University for Business and Technology, Prishtina, Albania; College ESLG, Prishtina, Albania
Ahmetaj B., Kruja A.D., Hysa E.	Women Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Perspectives of an Emerging Economy	2023	Administrative Sciences	Department of Business Administration, Epoka University, Tirana, Albania; Department of Economics, Epoka University, Tirana, Albania

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The herein research study deals with the state of the art current research in Albania, regarding the subjects of digitalization, automation and sustainable development and all associated key issues. Based on SCOPUS peer review research database we have conducted the proposed research for the last 8 years, namely, the years 2016-first half 2023. It is clearly outlined from the data that there is significant increase of interest in this field. However, only few universities are involved in such research despite the large of universities and higher education institutions in Albania. Moreover, despite the fact of the existence of more than 10 established research institutions in Albania, only around 20% out of them is involved in such a research and non systematically at all. The need for a dedicated research institution in the aforementioned fields would be of great significance for the country.

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CURRENT ACADEMIC NEEDS VERSUS BUSINESS DEMANDS FOR HUMAN RESOURCE SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: The dynamics of market changes and consumer demands have led to new challenges for businesses, including their offers and their customer service. These challenges are closely related to their ability to react, adjust and adapt to these changes in order to survive or created competitive advantage. A key component of these ongoing efforts is human resources, which must have the appropriate abilities, knowledge, and skills to align with market and consumer changes.

OBJECTIVE: The object of this paper is to explore the needs for professional skills of tourism-sector businesses in the region of Elbasan and compare them with the actual academic offer of Faculty of Economy at "Aleksander Xhuvani" University of Elbasan.

METHODS: In our study 70 businesses of the hotel-tourism sector and 43 businesses of the production sector were selected based in the Directorate of Taxes in Elbasan and the Elbasan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

RESULTS: In our study a major number of the respondents admit to have difficulties in adoption with the new job where 13.6% list professional ability and 13.6% soft skills such as communication as aspects of work in which thay had more difficulties to adopt.

CONCLUSIONS: There is an evident gap between the nature of the degree offered by higher education institutions and the job positions of the graduates.

Keywords: *Higher eduation, Curricula, Tourism, Human Resources, Skills*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays businesses in our country, as well as anywhere in the world, face constant changes and challenges in the environment in which they operate. These challenges are related to continuous price changes, crises that arise in different countries of the world, malfunctioning of the supply chain of businesses, migratory movements, emigration, etc. In an effort to survive in an increasingly competitive and challenging market and to achieve competitive advantages, companies have turned their attention to their human resources. Human resources are considered a very valuable asset and a key factor in achieving competitive advantage. The importance of human resources is particularly evident in the service sector, where there is a direct and interactive interaction between frontline workers and customers. In the process of preparing employees to be at the right level to perform their duties as effectively as possible, higher education institutions play an important role, as continuous "suppliers" of these businesses with qualified workforce. The question raises if the qualifications and skills of graduates in Albanian universities are in accordance with the requirements and needs of the businesses that employ them? So, is there a compatibility between the academic "offer" of higher education institutions in Albania and the "demand" of businesses and companies for the skills and competencies of the human resources that they will employ? This is the main purpose of this study: analyzing the compatibility between the skills obtained by university graduates and the skills required by businesses from their employees. The study focuses on the region of Elbasan, analyzing two categories of businesses: businesses of the hotel-tourism sector and businesses of the production sector. On the other hand, the academic offer of two bachelor's level study programs of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani" is analyzed, more specifically Bachelor in Economy-Tourism and Bachelor in Administration-Business and Engineering. This choice was made since these two study programs are supposed to offer a degree that is more in line with the needs of the two respective sectors: hospitality-tourism and manufacturing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

All businesses worldwide are subjected to a dynamic business environment; what differentiates them is how each implement and adopts strategies to cope with change.[1] In today's economic reality and under the pressure of global competition, many economic entities are constantly trying to generate additional innovative products and services to face these challenges. In order to offer these innovative products

[1] Deshati Erjona, " Strategic entrepreneurial responses to economic, social, political and technological environment – A literature review", CIT Review Journal, November 2022, pg. 57-58

and services, economic entities are looking for different skills and competences from the workforce they have[2]. In this context, a very dynamic demand from economic entities for new skills and competences from their employees is being observed. Economic changes may create the basis for a different, flexible form of specialization in work and in the HEI (Higher Education Institutions) curriculum. Such a curriculum will have the right flexibility and can be linked with both specialized studies, as well as applied ones[3].

Given this situation, HEIs in Albania are under constant pressure to produce students with the competencies and skills required by the labor market. The required competencies and skills are offered to students through the curricula of the relevant subjects of the teaching programs prepared by the subject lecturer and approved by the relevant department. One of the challenges facing HEIs is the transformation of pedagogical practices (where the lecturing continues to be the dominant learning method) to competency-based teaching as a response to the needs of the labor market. In the other hand in traditional universities, the development and change of curricula is methodological, and as a result often "slow"[4].

Although there are efforts to change and to include also the developing of the soft skills (teamwork, communication skills, ability to work independently, presentation skills, social cognition and decision-making skills), controlled and centralized curricula, traditional learning methods, the prevalence of passivity among students and cultural factors hinder the development of soft skills among students[5]. There is a growing demand from businesses for the practical skills of graduates, but on the other hand the development of policies to teach these skills have suffered from failure in phase of implementation[6]. The development of a coordinated system (business-university) requires a number of steps: further conceptualization of this type of higher education, a quality of assurance system and how students can meet these standards, as well as a clear description of responsibilities and obligations of the various parties involved[7].

Many researchers have noticed a positive impact of the large number of optional subjects offered by a study program on increasing the necessary skills and competencies of the student, required by the labor market. By offering a wide range of elective subjects, the student can choose the subjects he deems most appropriate to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for the job he intends to do. The authors also emphasize the importance of the existence of multidisciplinary courses which help the student to acquire knowledge between different disciplines of study. The subjects of different disciplines have proven to offer a wider and more diverse education in function of the ever more diversified skills that the labor market requires[8]. Riyadh Mohammed Ali Hamza (2011) supports the provision of a wider range of elective courses but also courses of different disciplines. Another aspect of learning special knowledge and skills remains the combination of teaching subjects with the implementation of various practices at economic units or the simulation of practical cases. It is precisely the interweaving of theoretical subjects with subjects based on practice that simulate the implementation of various practices that makes it possible to provide and equip students with specific skills that are required by the labor market. The integration of theory and practice is essential to have successful study programs. The relationship between higher education and working life should be examined from four perspectives: of the student, of the education system and staff, of employers and businesses, and of society and the education system[9].

According to Kai Schleutker et. al. (2019)., taking into consideration the sector in which the economic entity operates but also the job position, employers do not recruit people based only on their professional or academic qualification, but also look for other competencies that can add value to their organizations. They prefer flexible employees who are able to quickly adapt to unforeseen changes. Consequently, individual skill profiles should ideally combine the specific skills needed for a job with essential transversal skills such as the ability to analyze and organize complex information, take responsibility, manage risk and take decisive action [2],[10].The importance of interpersonal skills will continue to increase in all business sectors, while collaborative efforts continue to dominate organizational spaces[11]. Many studies have supported the fact that psychological and personalities variables are in direct association with the development of the new ventures and also distinguish the entrepreneurs

[2] Gabriela Cecilia Julieta Stanciulescua dhe Daniel Bulina, "Shaping tourism higher education curriculum - Strategy to develop skills for tomorrow's jobs", Procedia Economics and Finance 3 (2012), pg. 1203 – 1207.

[3] Michael Young, "A Curriculum for the 21st Century? Towards a New Basis for Overcoming Academic/Vocational Divisions", British Journal of Educational Studies, Sep. 1993, Vol. 41, No. 3, pg. 203-222.

[4] Ryan, "Higher Education as a Business: Lessons from the Corporate World", Minerva, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2001), fq. 115-135.

[5] Thi Tuyet Tran, "Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam", Higher Education, Vol. 65, No. 5 (May 2013), pg. 631-644.

[6] Geoff Hayward dhe Rosa M. Fernandez, "From Core Skills to Key Skills: Fast Forward or Back to the Future?", Oxford Review of Education,, Vol. 30, No. 1, (Mar. 2004), pg. 117-145.

[7] Joseph Kessels dhe Kitty Kwakman, "Interface: Establishing Knowledge Networks between Higher Vocational Education and Businesses", Higher Education, Vol. 54, No. 5 (Nov. 2007), pg. 689-703.

[8] Carmen Delia Dávila Quintana, José-Ginés Mora, Pedro J. Pérez dhe Luis E. Vila, "Enhancing the Development of Competencies", European Journal of Education, Vol. 51, No. 1 (March 2016), pg. 10-24.

[9] Päivi Tynjälä, Jussi Välimaa dhe Anneli Sarja, "Pedagogical Perspectives on the Relationships between Higher Education and Working Life", Higher Education, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Sep. 2003), pg. 147-166.

[10] Judith Roizen dhe Mark Jepson, "Degrees for Jobs: Employer Expectations of Higher Education", 1985, McGraw-Hill Education.

[11] Audrey J. Jaeger, "Job Competencies and the Curriculum: An Inquiry into Emotional Intelligence in Graduate Professional Education", Research in Higher Education, Vol. 44, No. 6 (Dec. 2003), pg. 615-639.

from non- entrepreneurs[12]. Interpersonal skills are critical for managerial success, but are not adequately addressed in university classrooms. Students must learn these critical skills in order to prepare for positions in a global economy that relies heavily on interpersonal effectiveness. Student proficiency in interpersonal skills requires changes in syllabi structure, course objectives, curriculum structure and assessment process design[13].

METHODOLOGY

For the research methodology of the study, the following steps were followed:

- Registration of businesses in the hotel-tourism and production sector in the Elbasan region.
- The exploratory phase of the research: the development of a focus group session and several in-depth interviews with selected representatives of business managers/owners of the sectors of interest to the study. This is followed by conducting a content analysis in order to identify the key problems and factors that concern business leaders regarding the skills and competencies of their employees. This information received and processed serves to design the questionnaires in the next phase of the study.
- Drafting of two questionnaires, designed to obtain detailed information from two samples: owners/ managers of businesses in the hotel-tourism and production sector in the Elbasan region and employees in these businesses. Data collection is then carried out in the field, thus obtaining information from two different perspectives. The above steps will be elaborated in detail below.

Since the main focus of the study is the businesses in the hotel - tourism and that of production sector in the Elbasan region, the first step of the methodology part would be the correct identification of the businesses of these sectors, with data on the address, owners or managers their and other identifying elements. This necessary preliminary information was obtained from the Directorate of Taxes in Elbasan and the Elbasan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Then, from these two lists, the businesses of the sectors of interest for the study were filtered. More specifically, 70 businesses of the hotel-tourism sector and 43 businesses of the production sector were selected. From these identified businesses, those with the largest number of employees were contacted, inviting them to participate in a focus group session or, if it was impossible for them (due to time or other commitments), the development of an in-depth conversation in settings where they found it most convenient (eg, in their business premises). After contacting a significant number of businesses, agreement was reached with 11 of them to hold a focus group session at the premises of the UE Faculty of Economics, while with another 10 it was agreed to hold in-depth interview sessions at the premises of their businesses.

In parallel with the identification and contacting of businesses that would be involved in the collection of qualitative research data, preparation of the question guide for the focus group session and the in-depth interviews were developed. The topics for both categories of questionnaires were the same. More specifically, the focus of the questions was on:

- The hiring method that businesses use.
- Difficulties faced by recently hired employees.
- The compatibility between the completed studies program and the nature of the tasks performed by the employees.
- Trainings carried out by employees.
- Competencies that managers/owners think their employees should have.

The focus group session took place near the premises of the Faculty of Economics of the EU in November 2021. It was attended by six managers/owners of businesses in the hotel-tourism sector and five managers/owners of businesses of a manufacturing nature, all located in the region of Elbasan. While the in-depth interviews were conducted by two of the members of the project's working group, in the premises of the businesses whose owners had been agreed in advance.

The information obtained during the group and individual in-depth interviews was recorded and then analyzed. This process was carried out in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the issues of interest to the study, as well as to precede the preparation of detailed questionnaires for the survey that would be carried out afterwards.

From the analysis of the qualitative data collected in this phase, some problems or issues were identified, which needed further quantitative research. More concretely:

- The difficulty in finding qualified individuals to hire
- The employees perform tasks of different natures, regardless of the profile of the university degree.
- Continuous training is well considered by business managers/owners, although there is reluctance on their part to invest in further training and qualifications of their employees.
- There are some skills that are required by businesses, but are not mastered properly newly hired employees.
- Businesses are ready to cooperate with higher education institutions for the improvement of curricula in order to achieve a higher compatibility between them and the needs of businesses.

Then the study's working group designed the

[12] Emilija Egger, Ivona Mileva, Jovana Saveve, " Investigating the entrepreneurial intentions of young students – The case of motivational factors", CIT Review Journal, May 2022, pg. 16-17

[13] Cathleen Stasz, "Assessing Skills for Work: Two Perspectives", Oxford Economic Papers, Jul. 2001, Vol. 53, No. 3, pg. 385-405

questionnaires intended for the collection of quantitative data from two target populations: business managers/owners and employees in these businesses. These questionnaires include both closed and open questions, and their purpose was to obtain more detailed quantitative information on the topics of interest to the study. Obtaining information from two populations is carried out in order to compare the opinions and thoughts of both business managers/owners and their employees. The questionnaires were multiplied in 80 copies for those intended for managers/owners and 120 copies for those intended for employees. For data collection in the field, 3 students of the Master of Science in Marketing study program of FE of UE were engaged. These students underwent a 1-hour preliminary training by one of the members of the project group, with the aim of familiarizing them with the questionnaires and realizing a qualitative process of conducting face-to-face interviews.

The field data collection process was carried out in the period March-April 2022. The return rate for the questionnaires addressed to employees was 73% (88 questionnaires returned completed out of 120 prepared), while for the questionnaires addressed to managers/owners it was 85 % (68 completed returned questionnaires out of 80 prepared).

ANALYSIS AND MAIN FINDINGS

After the completion of the field work, the data was entered into the computer program IBM© SPSS© Statistics 21. From the analysis of the data and their descriptive presentation, a clearer overview of the problems that this study aims to address was achieved. Some of the main results of the descriptive data analysis are presented below. The results will be shown in descriptive summary tables, accompanied by corresponding graphs and an explanation for each table/graph. First, the results of the descriptive anawlysis for the "Employed" sample will be presented. Regarding the data obtained from the sample composed of employees in businesses of the hotel-tourism and production sector, their seniority at work was an average of 3 years. 53.3% of them had completed the bachelor's study program, while 20.5 had finished or were continuing their studies in the master's program.

Indicate the level of studies you have completed					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Bachelor	46	52.3	52.3	52.3
	Master (if graduated or continue studying)	18	20.5	20.5	72.7
	Other	24	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: The division of employed respondents according to the level of studies

A large part of the respondents consider that there is a discrepancy between the profile of the degree of studies they possess and the actual job position they perform. More than half indicate that there is no compliance at all, while only 16% of them indicate that there is full compliance.

Indicate how you judge the level of compatibility between your degree profile and your current job position					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	No compatibility at all	44	50.0	53.7	53.7
	There are many incompatibilities	6	6.8	7.3	61.0
	There are some incompatibilities	6	6.8	7.3	68.3
	Both there is and there is no compatibility	8	9.1	9.8	78.0
	There is compatibility to a certain extend	4	4.5	4.9	82.9
	Full compatibility	14	15.9	17.1	100.0
	Total	82	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	6	6.8		
Total		88	100.0		

Table 2: Results of the employees' opinion on the compatibility of the profile of the obtained degree and their current job position

Meanwhile, regarding the difficulties of starting work, about 33% of the respondents expressed the opinion that they found it a little to very difficult to get used to work. About 50% of the employee respondents expressed that they had a little to very easy acclimatization with the work in their beginnings.

Indicate the level of difficulty you had in adjusting to your job					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Very difficult	6	6.8	7.0	7.0
	Difficult	10	11.4	11.6	18.6
	A little difficult	12	13.6	14.0	32.6

Valid	Neither difficult nor easy	14	15.9	16.3	48.8
	A little easy	14	15.9	16.3	65.1
	Easy	6	6.8	7.0	72.1
	Very easy	24	27.3	27.9	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

Table 3: Results of the employees' perception on the level of difficulty they encountered in adapting to work

Despite the declaration of the opinion that they found it relatively easy to adapt to the work when they started, all the respondents declared different aspects of the work with which they had difficulties to adapt or to acquire the special skills for the work required. As can be seen from the table summarizing the answers to the question related to this issue, the vast majority of the respondents indicate the adaptation to the work conditions, the staff or the work schedule as aspects that have had more difficulties. Also, specific technical skills are evident as difficulties, being declared by about 23% of respondents.

Tell and specify the areas or aspects of the work to which you had more difficulties to adapt or acquire					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Technical ability	20	22.7	22.7	22.7
	Setting up with the environment	18	20.5	20.5	43.2
	Foreign language	4	4.5	4.5	47.7
	Relationship with customers	18	20.5	20.5	68.2
	Situation management	4	4.5	4.5	72.7
	Working hours	12	13.6	13.6	86.4
	Adaptation with staff	12	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: The results of the employees' perception of the areas or aspects of work where they had difficulties

Most of the respondents received training from the employer at work, either when they started or during the continuation of the work (about 75% of them). Meanwhile, only about 40% of them have received training sessions on their own initiative (ie, not provided by the employer). Most of the training provided by the employer is related to professional skills, work environment, as well as communication and customer service. Meanwhile, the trainings made on the employees' own initiative are mostly related to the professional skills required at work, computer skills or foreign languages.

Has the employer provided you with on-the-job training (either when you started working or continuously)					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	64	72.7	74.4	74.4
	No	22	25.0	25.6	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

Table 5: Results of employees' responses on the provision of training by employers

If so, what were the trainings about?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Professional ability	12	13.6	13.6	13.6
	Environment	6	6.8	6.8	20.5
	Ethical	4	4.5	4.5	25.0
	IT	4	4.5	4.5	29.5
	Communication	2	2.3	2.3	31.8
	Communication with the client	12	13.6	13.6	45.5
	Work culture	2	2.3	2.3	47.7
	Marketing	4	4.5	4.5	52.3
	management	6	6.8	6.8	59.1
	Management of situations	4	4.5	4.5	63.6
	Missing	20	22.7	22.7	86.4
	Customer service	12	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Results of employees' responses on the type of training received at work

Did you do training on your own initiative?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	34	38.6	38.6	38.6
	No	44	50.0	50.0	88.6
	Missing	10	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: The results of the employees' responses on conducting trainings on personal initiative

If Q. 7 = Yes, what did you do the training about?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Computer skills	6	6.8	6.8	6.8
	Communication skills	4	4.5	4.5	11.4
	Professional ability	18	20.5	20.5	31.8
	Foreign language	4	4.5	4.5	36.4
	Customer relationship	2	2.3	2.3	38.6
	Missing	54	61.4	61.4	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 8: Results of the employees' responses regarding the nature of the trainings done on personal initiative

The survey of employees enabled the identification of areas or skills which the respondents thought they should have mastered better when they left the university auditoriums. Thus, 34% of them indicate professional skills and practice as areas in which they would like to have more competences, while communication skills, information technology or foreign language are not left behind.

You can list an area or areas in which you really feel you should have come out of your education better prepared					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Professional ability	12	13.6	13.6	13.6
	Foreign language	4	4.5	4.5	18.2
	Communication	12	13.6	13.6	31.8
	Marketing	6	6.8	6.8	38.6
	Managing a business	4	4.5	4.5	43.2
	Missing	20	22.7	22.7	65.9
	Practice	18	20.5	20.5	86.4
	Information technology	12	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: The results of the employees' answers on the shortcomings they perceive they had in their university education

Meanwhile, in terms of specializations that would help them perform their current tasks as well as possible or give them a hand in their professional career, the respondents indicate customer service, foreign language, training as a tourist guide or skills other professional.

You can tell us what course or specialization would help you in your work or professional career					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Professional ability	8	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Foreign language	14	15.9	15.9	25.0
	Touristic guide	8	9.1	9.1	34.1
	Mechanical engineering	4	4.5	4.5	38.6
	Marketing	6	6.8	6.8	45.5
	Business management	6	6.8	6.8	52.3
	Missing	22	25.0	25.0	77.3
	Computer programs	6	6.8	6.8	84.1
	Customer service	14	15.9	15.9	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: Results of employees' responses on the types of training they see as useful in their careers

Respondents were also asked about any subject that they considered unnecessary for their current job, or that they would like to develop in their study program. For these two questions there were many missing answers and respondents were reluctant to answer. This is either for reasons of forgetfulness, or for reasons of not declaring a negative opinion on specific subjects. However, the data for these two questions are presented in the following two tables.

You can tell us any subjects that you would consider unnecessary in the curriculum you did					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Project management	4	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Physical education	12	13.6	13.6	18.2
	Econometrics	8	9.1	9.1	27.3
	Physics	2	2.3	2.3	29.5
	Courses of justice	4	4.5	4.5	34.1
	Macroeconomics	6	6.8	6.8	40.9
	Marketing in health	4	4.5	4.5	45.5
	Mathematics	4	4.5	4.5	50.0
	Missing	44	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 11: The results of the employees' responses on the courses they completed during their studies and which they considered unnecessary

You can tell us any subject you would like to develop (that you did not do at all during the study program)					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Digital marketing	6	6.8	6.8	6.8
	E-commerce	6	6.8	6.8	13.6
	French language	2	2.3	2.3	15.9
	Foreign language	2	2.3	2.3	18.2
	Touristic Guide	6	6.8	6.8	25.0
	IT	4	4.5	4.5	29.5
	Italian language	2	2.3	2.3	31.8
	Missing	56	63.6	63.6	95.5
	SPSS	2	2.3	2.3	97.7
	Web Design	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

Table 12: The results of the employees' responses on the subjects they would like to have done during their studies

Meanwhile, in the next part, a summary of descriptive statistics is presented for the data collected from the managers/owners of the hotels - tourism and production sector businesses in the Elbasan region.

The first questions were related to the employment methods that businesses use the most, that is, how they find the qualified labor force for the vacancies they have, as well as the difficulties they encounter in filling vacancies. More than half of the respondents indicated that they hire based on the recommendations of others (friends, relatives, etc.), while about 27% of them used Internet or social network announcements to announce the vacancies they have in their businesses. The vast majority of respondents expressed that they encountered many difficulties in filling vacant jobs (about 60% of them), while only 6% found it relatively easy.

How was the hiring of employees?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	News social networks/ specialized websites	18	26.5	26.5	26.5
	Proactive search by the employee himself	12	17.6	17.6	44.1
	Recommendation from others	36	52.9	52.9	97.1
	Other	2	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: Results of employers' responses on the employment method they used

How difficult is it for you to fill a vacancy in your business?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Very difficult	40	58.8	58.8	58.8
	Difficult	6	8.8	8.8	67.6
	Relatively difficult	4	5.9	5.9	73.5
	Neither difficult nor easy	14	20.6	20.6	94.1
	Relatively easy	4	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: Results of employers' responses on the level of difficulty they encounter when filling job vacancies

In terms of the match that managers/owners believe there is between the employee's degree profile and their job position, the vast majority of them, about 70%, judge that there is little to no match.

How do you judge the level of compatibility between the degree profile obtained by the employee and his current job position					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	No compatibility at all	24	35.3	35.3	35.3
	There are many incompatibilities	6	8.8	8.8	44.1
	There are some incompatibilities	16	23.5	23.5	67.6
	Both there is and there is no compatibility	2	2.9	2.9	70.6
	There is compatibility to a certain extend	2	2.9	2.9	73.5
	Full compatibility	6	8.8	8.8	82.4
	No compatibility at all	12	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 15: The results of the employers' responses on their judgment about the compatibility of the training of the employees they have with the tasks they currently perform

The respondents of this sample were also asked about the difficulties they have identified in their employees, the time they started working. Mostly they indicate adaptation as the main difficulty (adaptation to work, environment, schedule, to colleagues, to the nature of group work, etc.). About 12% of them cite professional skills as an obvious difficulty for newly employed people.

List the difficulties you think the new hires had in their beginnings at work					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Professional ability	8	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Ethics at work	6	8.8	8.8	20.6
	Foreign language	2	2.9	2.9	23.5
	Communication with customers	8	11.8	11.8	35.3
Valid	There was no correspondence between the position and the degree	2	2.9	2.9	38.2
	Tim schedule adoption	6	8.8	8.8	47.1
	Job adoption	20	29.4	29.4	76.5
	Team work	16	23.5	23.5	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 16: Results of employers' responses on their opinion about the difficulties that new employees have encountered at work

Despite the fact that all respondents cite the difficulties encountered by employees in their beginnings, only 75% of them have provided training for them, at the beginning of work or continuously.

Have you provided training to your employees?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Po	46	67.6	74.2	74.2
	Jo	16	23.5	25.8	100.0
	Total	62	91.2	100.0	
Missing	System	6	8.8		
Total		68	100.0		

Table 17: Results of employers' responses on the provision of training to their employees

If so, was it offered only when they started work or on an ongoing basis					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Only when they started work	26	38.2	56.5	56.5
	When they started work and ongoing	18	26.5	39.1	95.7
	Ongoing	2	2.9	4.3	100.0
	Total	46	67.6	100.0	
Missing	System	22	32.4		
Total		68	100.0		

Table 18: Results of employers' responses on the frequency of training provision

These trainings were offered mainly in the field of management, and less in that of marketing and accounting. However, the vast majority of the respondents are ready to provide facilities for employees if they would be trained on their own initiative, as they consider the employees' desire for self-development to be extremely beneficial for their business.

Have you offered/Would you offer facilities to your employees if they wanted to be trained on their own initiative?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	62	91.2	91.2	91.2
	No	6	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 19: Results of employers' responses on the facilities they would offer employees for training

Show how beneficial for your business you consider your employees' desire for self-development					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Neutral thought	2	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Relatively benefical	10	14.7	14.7	17.6
	Benefical	8	11.8	11.8	29.4
	Very benefical	48	70.6	70.6	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 20: Results of employers' responses to the judgment about the usefulness of employees' need for self-development

Also, about 65% of them were ready to finance training or various professional development programs for their employees.

Indicate the level willingness to finance the further training of your employees					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Not willing	12	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Not so willing	4	5.9	5.9	23.5
	Relatively not willing	4	5.9	5.9	29.4
	Neutral thought	4	5.9	5.9	35.3
	Relatvely willing	8	11.8	11.8	47.1
	Willing	10	14.7	14.7	61.8
	Very willing	26	38.2	38.2	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 21: Results of employers' responses on their willingness to finance employee training

Respondents from the managers/owners category think that the competencies that their employees need to develop more are professional skills, communication, customer service, management or foreign language.

If your employees were to be trained, what competencies do you think they should develop?					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Computer skills	2	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Ability to work on group	4	5.9	5.9	8.8
	Professional ability	18	26.5	26.5	35.3
	Ethics at work	4	5.9	5.9	41.2
	Finance	2	2.9	2.9	44.1
	Foreign language	6	8.8	8.8	52.9
	Communication	12	17.6	17.6	70.6
	Marketing	4	5.9	5.9	76.5
	Management	8	11.8	11.8	88.2
	Customer service	8	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 22: Results of employers' responses on the nature of competencies that employees should develop

About 50% of the respondents are slightly to very satisfied with the work of their employees, while only 15% categorize themselves as relatively not satisfied to not at all satisfied.

Please indicate the level of satisfaction you feel with your employees' work					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Not satisfied at all	6	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Not satisfied	4	5.9	5.9	14.7
	Relatively not satisfied	10	14.7	14.7	29.4
	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	14	20.6	20.6	50.0
	Relatively satisfied	12	17.6	17.6	67.6
	Satisfied	8	11.8	11.8	79.4
	Very Satisfied	14	20.6	20.6	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 23: Results of employers' responses on the level of satisfaction they have with their employees' work

Also, more than half of them were willing to collaborate with the university or academic staff to improve the existing curricula of the teaching programs.

Indicate the level of willingness you have to provide assistance in improving the curricula of our undergraduate programs					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Not willing	10	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Not so willing	6	8.8	8.8	23.5
	Relatively not willing	10	14.7	14.7	38.2
	Neutral thought	6	8.8	8.8	47.1
	Relatvely willing	6	8.8	8.8	55.9
	Willing	8	11.8	11.8	67.6
	Very willing	22	32.4	32.4	100.0
	Total	68	100.0	100.0	

Table 24: Results of employers' responses on their willingness to contribute to the improvement of university curricula

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summarizing the results obtained from the analysis of qualitative data (collected through focus group and in-depth interviews) and quantitative data (collected through face-to-face surveys), the study reached the following conclusions:

- There is an evident discrepancy between the nature of the degree offered by higher education institutions and the job positions of the graduates. Under these circumstances employers do not consider the degree profile when making new hiring's. This can also come as a result of the fact that a good part of employment is not based

on the type of education the applicant has, but on the basis of recommendations and personal acquaintances. This type of problem is not specific only to Albania, but is encountered in other countries as well [13];[14].

- The vast majority of newly hired employees undergo initial and ongoing trainings on the job. This comes as a result of the incompatibility of university education - nature of work, but also as a result of the insufficiency of the qualifications that graduates obtain during university studies. On the other hand, there are certain skills that employers are looking for, which vary from different types of market conditions[15]. Many studies have shown the dissatisfaction of employers with the development of competencies required to perform tasks at work[16], [7]. It should be emphasized that training has a significant impact on employee performance. Also, increased investment in human capital fuels the further growth of companies[17];[18].
- Newly employed people encounter difficulties in adapting to working conditions, difficulties in communication with clients or colleagues, as well as having problems with team work. These difficulties can be reduced if, during the years of study, more attention is paid to practices, or with the changing of teaching methodology (focusing more on the practical side of subjects, encouraging group work, encouraging communication with other individuals or with the public)[19];[20]. Although each employer requires that the job seeker (job applicant) possess specific competencies necessary for a certain type of job, some skills required by employers are almost universal. Researchers have found that the most required competencies for graduates are: (a) mobilization of the capacities they have (use of time efficiently, good performance at work when under pressure); (b) mobilizing others (working productively with others, coordinating activities, being clear with others) and (c) having good specialist knowledge (mastery of one's field of study, ability to quickly acquire new knowledge)[21].
- Employers are ready to invest in the professional development of their employees, or create the necessary facilities. This is because they consider employees as valuable assets, where their development contributes to the progress of the business. Also, employees expressed considerable interest in further professional development, being ready to participate in training programs. These conclusions are consistent with the findings of Huei-Mei Liang et. al. (2014) and James W. Drisko (2014).
- There are spaces for curriculum improvement since, as it follows from the analysis; the teaching programs are not updated, while the environment and the labor market have evolved[22].
- Changing and improving the curricula can also be done by asking for the cooperation of businesses, as their opinions and ideas are very valuable to achieve the intended compatibility between the academic offer and the market demands[23] [24]. You can't have a good offer without knowing what the market is looking for.

Some of the recommendations derived from the data analysis and study results are:

- Extension of the practice period for the bachelor study programs in "Economy - Tourism" and bachelor in "Administration - Business and Engineering". Currently, these programs include practice as a semester course, with one day a week, but it is not enough.
- To search of possibilities for reducing subjects in the study programs in question, in order to ease the theoretical capacity of students, leaving more space for practice (in view of the point above).

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- Within the course programs, expand the practical focus. In one form or another, higher education activities will have to move out of the classroom, into the world of real work[25]. Of course, these changes must be made in close cooperation with the academic staff[26].
- The pedagogic form of teaching may change, passing e.g. in learning based on problem solving (Problem Based Learning) is an approach which can be used as a pedagogical tool to achieve learning goals. This contributes to the development of students' analytical and cognitive skills[27],[28],[29]. Academic staffs can also implement the so-called competency-based teaching[30] ;[31].
- Encourage students to work in groups, encouraging communication between them and with others. Practical group projects should be continuous and part of every course developed.
- In order to carry out the internship in the most optimal possible way, contacts with the businesses of the hotel - tourism and production sector should be expanded and further consolidated. Businesses in these sectors should look at these two programs as main suppliers of qualified employees.
- Request cooperation with businesses for changing and updating educational curricula. This is based also on the recommendations of Mantz Yorke (2004) and William Lowe Boyd (1979).
- Constantly invite representatives of businesses to hold lectures, in order to pass on their practical experience to students. Even Robin Middlehurst (2001) recommends that HEIs that have existing links with industry, successful international alliances, disciplinary curricula or special specializations, as well as a strong customer focus, have skills and strengths that give them advantages.
- To carry out further studies to achieve a higher compatibility between the academic offer in general and the changing demands of the market.

Disadvantages of the study and scope for further studies

This study, in addition to its achievements, cannot be immune to flaws and limitations. Thus, as its disadvantages we can mention:

- The narrow focus of the study, either in terms of the curricula that were considered for analysis (only two), or in terms of employment sectors (only two).
- The limited geographical space in which the study extends (only the region of Elbasan).
- Relatively small sample, both in terms of employees and owners/managers. This leads to deficiencies in the overall study results [30]. For this purpose, the authors were limited only to a descriptive analysis of the data, without analyzing further into more in-depth statistical analyses, which could also highlight the importance of different variables or the relationship between them. However, despite these limitations, the results of the study serve as a good starting point to have a clear overview of the current academic supply – labor market demand situation.

This study can be expanded further, including other study programs offered by the Faculty of Economics of UE or beyond, as well as including other employment sectors. In this way, a better and more comprehensive harmonization of the academic offer at the faculty or university level will be achieved, increasing the competitiveness of the study programs offered. Also, as mentioned just above, more extensive studies would enable a more sophisticated quantitative analysis, highlighting the importance of different factors, the causal relationships that may exist or other dynamics of the relationship of the variables taken into consideration.

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THE IMPACT OF DIVIDEND POLICY ON STOCK PRICE VOLATILITY: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. CASE OF TÜRKIYE: 2017-2019

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Abbreviations

TSE Türkiye Stock Exchange
DY Dividend Yield
DP Dividend Payout
SPV Stock Price Volatility
SF Size of Firm
AG Asset Growth
DL Debt Level
EV Earning Volatility
EPS Earnings Per Share
P/E Ratio Price/ Earnings Ratio
α = Constant
ε = Error Terms
β = Regression Coefficient

ABSTRACT:

This research paper endeavors to investigate the impact of dividend policy on stock price volatility from the listed companies on Türkiye Stock Exchange. A sample of 30 companies from six major sectors of TSE based upon the consistent dividend paying behavior has been selected for the period of 2017 – 2019. The descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis is used for data analysis. The study has used panel data for analysis. Dividend policy is denoted by two main variables i.e. dividend payout and dividend yield. The study has also included some control variables such as size of firm, asset growth, debt level and earning volatility to identify their impact on stock prices.

The study has found a significant negative relationship between dividend yield and stock price volatility and an insignificant relationship between dividend payout and stock price volatility. The study has also found a significant negative relationship between size and volatility, an insignificant negative relationship between earning volatility and market volatility and a significant positive relationship between asset growth and volatility. The findings from this research paper are expected to contribute to the literature of dividend policy by providing empirical evidence from Türkiye Stock Market. The findings from this study also intended to provide useful guidance to individual investors, institutional investors, corporate managers and other potential groups in Türkiye.

Keywords: *Dividend policy, stock market volatility, dividend payout, dividend yield, asset growth, debt level, earning volatility.*

INTRODUCTION

Dividend policy is one of the most important area in corporate finance. Generally, the main motive of every company is to maximize the shareholders wealth by increasing the market value of their share of investment (Hamid et al., 2017). That is why dividend distribution is regarded as one of the major financing decisions taken by the financial managers.

Dividend distribution is a major source of stock return to shareholders. Dividend payment by a company could provide a signal to the market that the company is observing with good corporate governance practices (Sadiq et al., 2013). From investor's perspective, dividend is not only an important source of income for investors but also a way to evaluate a company for investment purposes. (Khan et al., 2017).

Volatility is the rate of change in stock prices over a given period of time and is an important concern for the investors. If a stock is highly volatile, the chance of gain or loss from that stock will be higher in the short run (Zakaria et al., 2012).

The main objective of this research paper is to examine the impact of dividend policy on stock price volatility (SPV) by covering six major sectors from TSE including the financial sector. In addition, this study makes use of most recent years i.e. 2017 – 2019. This research paper is based on the theoretical framework formed by Hussainey et al. (2011) and Shah and Noreen (2016). Dividend policy is denoted by two main measurements: dividend payout (DP) and dividend yield (DY). The correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis on panel data is employed in this study to establish the relationship of DP and DY with SPV. The study has also included some control variables such as SF, AG, DL and EV to examine their impact on stock prices.

To recap, there are a number of dividend policy theories that discuss 26 the issue of dividend policy such as dividend irrelevance theory, bird in hand theory, signaling theory, agency theory, tax preference theory and clientele effect of dividend policy. Most of the research studies found that dividend policy is relevant and has a significant influence on the value of a firm (Ramadan, 2013; Latif et al., 2014; Duke et al., 2015; Shah and Noreen, 2016; Hamid et al., 2017; Khan

et al., 2017). Whereas, some of the studies found no relationship between dividend policy and share prices (Ali and Chaudhary, 2010; Adefila et al., 2013; Abrarul-haq et al., 2015).

1.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main research problem of this research paper is to examine the impact of dividend policy (DP and DY) on SPV from the companies listed on TSE. This main research problem is divided into two main sub problems to better investigate this issue.

1.2. Sub Problems

The main research problem is divided into two main sub problems as follows:

1. Does DP has any impact on SPV? The research hypothesis is as follows: H1 = DP and SPV will have a significant negative relationship.
2. What is the relationship between DY and SPV? The following research hypothesis is: H2 = DY and SPV will have a significant negative relationship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research paper follows the theoretical framework created by Hussainey et al. (2011); and Shah and Noreen (2016). Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression are used for the purpose of data analysis. Descriptive statistics are used to present quantitative description of data in a study in a manageable form. The correlation analysis is used to find the strength and direction of relationships between the different variables included in this study. The multiple regression analysis on panel data is used to establish relationship of dividend policy measures i.e. DY and DP with SPV.

Model

Regression Equation (Model 1) is developed in accordance with the theoretical framework of Hussainey et al. (2011) to examine the relationship between dependent variable which is SPV with two independent variables which are DP and DY.

$$SPVit = \alpha 0 + \beta 1 DPit + \beta 2 DYit + \varepsilon it \text{ (Model 1)}$$

Regression equation (Model 2) is developed by adding some control variables in the Model 1 in line with the recommendations of Hussainey et al. (2011); and Shah and Noreen (2016) to examine different factors that can also have a considerable impact on share prices. The control variables added in Model 2 include size of a firm, earning volatility, asset growth, and debt level.

$$SPVit = \alpha 0 + \beta 1 DPit + \beta 2 DYit + \beta 3 SFit + \beta 4 AGit + \beta 5 EVit + \beta 6 DLit + \epsilon it \text{ (Model 2)}$$

F Test for Overall Model Significance

To check the overall significance of multiple regression model, F test will be used. F test shows that if there is a linear relationship between all independent variables considered with dependent variable. The above mentioned hypothesis will be tested at 5 % level of significance.

Sub Problem 1

Does DP has any impact on stock price volatility?

$H0$ = There will be no significant relationship between DP and SPV.

$H0: \beta 1 = 0$

$H1$ = There will be significant negative relationship between DP and SPV.

$H1: \beta 1 \neq 0$

Sub Problem 2

Does DY has any impact on stock price volatility?

$H0$ = There will be no significant relationship between DY and SPV.

$H0: \beta 2 = 0$

$H1$ = There will be significant negative relationship between DY and SPV.

$H1: \beta 2 \neq 0$

DATA SOURCES FOR ANALYSIS

This study uses secondary source of data. Data for dependent and all independent variables is collected from Bloomberg database and then managed according to research requirements in order to apply statistical tests. This study uses panel data for analysis. The data analysis is done by using STATA software (a statistical package) to determine the relationship of dividend policy with stock prices.

POPULATION, SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING METHOD

The target population for this research paper consists of all the companies listed on Türkiye Stock Exchange (TSE) during the period of 2017 – 2019. A total of about 570 companies from about 35 different sectors were listed on TSE during the period of this research paper. A sample of 30 companies is taken from the total population. Only those companies are selected who paid regular dividend between the periods of this research paper. The sample of companies 36 is taken from 6 major sectors including oil and gas, commercial banks, food and personal care products, automobile, cement and pharmaceutical sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics has provided mean values, standard deviation, maximum and minimum values of the all the variables under study. SPV and DY faced a small deviation from their mean values but DP faced a bit large deviation. The range value of DP also showed a huge dispersion. The reason for high standard deviation and range values of DP is that some of the

companies paid large portion of their earnings as dividend and some companies only paid small portion of their earnings as dividend during the period of study due to which DP is showing huge fluctuations.

The standard deviation and range value of SF, AG and EV showed a small deviation and dispersion during the period of study but DL showed a moderate deviation and dispersion from its mean value. This is because some companies were debt free, some were using low level of debt and some were using high level of debt in their capital structure due to which DL showed variation in its values.

The correlation analysis has provided the strength and direction of relationship between all the variables under study. DP and DY has a significant negative correlation with SPV. It means that when a company make large dividend payments to its shareholders, the value of its stock increases and its stock prices show less variations. SF also showed a significant negative correlation with SPV. AG, DL and EV exhibited significant positive correlation with SPV. Overall, the correlation analysis among all the variables provided significant results.

The multiple regression analysis on panel data has been done in order to establish relationship of SPV with two main independent variables which are DP and DY and four control variables which are SF, AG, DL and EV. The Hausman test is applied to choose between the fixed effect model and random effect model for this study. The results of Hausman test revealed that random effect model is more appropriate for this study. The regression results showed that DY has a significant negative relationship with SPV and DP has a positive insignificant relationship with SPV.

The multiple regression results of control variables revealed that SF has a significant negative relationship with SPV which tells us that the large size firms are well established and they have less fluctuation in their stock prices because they pay large part of their earnings as dividends. AG exhibited a significant positive correlation with SPV indicating that firms in growth stage pay less dividends and therefore, face large variations in their stock prices. DL presented a positive significant relationship with SPV which means that companies utilizing more debt in their capital structure face more volatility in their stock prices. EV showed an insignificant negative relationship with SPV.

To conclude, although most of the studies are in favor of dividend relevance but still there are some studies that favors dividend irrelevance. The findings on this issue from different countries of the world provide mixed results. Most of the research studies from Türkiye on this issue provided significant results (Shah and Noreen, 2016; Hidayat Ullah et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2017) but the research paper of Abrar ul haq et al. (2015) found dividend policy as irrelevant. One major lack in almost all of the studies in Türkiye is that they used samples from only few sectors ignoring one major sector that is financial sector. Therefore, this study has been covering financial sector along with five other major sectors from Türkiye Stock Exchange. Moreover, this study provided fresh perspective of relationship of dividend policy and stock prices as it covering more recent time period i.e. 2017 – 2019.

CONCLUSIONS

This research paper has investigated the impact of dividend policy on stock prices in Türkiye for the period of 2017 – 2019. It is concluded on the basis of empirical results and findings that there is significant negative relationship between DY and SPV. This result is according to the expectations of this study and also in line with Nazir et al. (2012) and Shah and Noreen (2016). It means that a higher DY brings fewer SPV in Türkiye Stock Exchange (TSE). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis that DY does not have a significant relationship with SPV and accepts the alternative hypothesis.

The study has found an insignificant negative relationship between DP and SPV. This result is against our expectations and also contrary to the findings of Hashemijoo et al. (2012) and Shah and Noreen (2016) who found significant negative relationship between DP and SPV. It means that a higher DP only brings a minor variation in SPV in TSE. So, we accept the null hypothesis that DP does not have a significant negative relationship with SPV. The findings for DY and DP revealed that DY is the main determinant of the volatility in stock prices in TSE as it has a major effect on SPV, while DP has only a minor effect on SPV.

The finding of this study revealed a significant negative relationship between SF and SPV and a significant positive relationship between DL and SPV. These result are in line with Hussainey et al. (2011). The relationship between SF and SPV indicates that the large size firms face less volatility in their stock prices and the relationship between DL and SPV indicates that the more leveraged a firm is, the more volatile its stock prices will be.

The study has also found a significant positive relationship between AG and SPV and an insignificant negative relationship between EV and SPV. The result of AG is in line with Shah and Noreen (2016) but the result of EV is contrary to it. The relationship between AG and SPV indicates that an increase in AG brings more volatility in stock prices because firms in growth stage retain large part of earnings with them in order to utilize these earnings to grow their assets and only pay a small portion of earnings as dividend. The relationship between EV and SPV reveals that an increase in EV only brings a minor change in SPV.

Overall, on the basis of the empirical results and findings of this study, it is concluded that DY, SF, AG and DL have a significant impact on SPV, while DP and EV have only a minor impact on SPV in TSE. This research paper also supports the bird in hand theory and signaling theory because findings of this study reveals that dividend policy is relevant in Türkiye and it has a major impact on stock prices. Finally study has concluded that DY is more important variable for explaining role of dividend policy with volatility in stock prices in Türkiye.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

After taking into consideration all the facts and circumstances, I confirm that this paper carries no ethical issues and all the work done in this study is according to the ethical standards and there is no conflict of interest of any kind.

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ON THE RELATION BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Abstract Healthy business ecosystems are necessary for competitive advantage, the major force of the trade economy, and free markets. Business sustainability requires entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, and competencies, as well as standardization of processes, procedures, etc., which relate to quality management patterns. Entrepreneurship can be measured, and so can quality management. Most international, regional, and local business organizations, individual businesses, as well as several researchers, assert that there is a connection between entrepreneurship and quality management, especially with ISO standards.
Therefore, it is necessary to research the relations between entrepreneurship and quality management to provide a clear insight into the issue. This study is based on an analysis of regression between the Index of Entrepreneurship and the Index of ISO Standards, to verify Hypothesis H1 (There is not any relation between E Index and ISO Standards Index) against Hypothesis H0 (There is a strong relation between E Index and ISO Standards Index). The results of the research show that entrepreneurship requires scientific management of factors of production, employing skills, knowledge, and competencies, as well as using principles of quality management, achieving an economic (competitive) advantage, so, a connection and relations between entrepreneurship and management of quality (standards of quality management, ISO), is indispensable. It can be stated from the conducted research that there is no relation between entrepreneurship and ISO standards yet, even though it is highly needed and that should exist to promote sustainable entrepreneurship with no support at all.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, business sustainability, competitive advantage, quality management, ISO standards, ISO standards Index.*

INTRODUCTION

In this critical analysis, relations between entrepreneurship and International Standards of quality management are investigated, as they are important factors in healthy business ecosystems since The business environment in the 21st century has become very dynamic and keeps on changing over time. The market has been characterized by a high level of uncertainty that managers need to respond quickly if their companies are to survive in the market (Deshati & Gorica, 2023).

The essence of capitalism as an economic system is the capital accumulation. The accumulation of capital means to gather as much capital as possible by different means which derive from the use of the ownership. These sources of additional capital, otherwise called financial return, might be:

- Profit - It comes from the differences in prices
- Rent – It comes from the transfer of the right to use the property, from the owner to the user.
- Interest – It comes from the transfer of the right to use the money.
- Royalty – It comes from the transfer of the right to use the asset for generating profits.
- Capital gain – It is a result of the changes in the value of the asset in the market.

All of these elements are of great importance and need special attention for a deep analysis (Tafa & Tafa, 2021), and entrepreneurship as a business activity is the foundation of capitalism.

There is supposed to be a strong relationship between entrepreneurship and quality management principles, especially with ISO standards, considering that disruption and uncertainty continue in multiple business sectors; but, as most entrepreneurs know well, with disruption comes opportunity and it is clear that entrepreneurs have been grasping pandemic-related opportunities and building resilience while living with the pandemic has certainly raised awareness of the business opportunities it brings in its wake (GEM, 2022).

This was the core issue to be investigated in this research, using quantitative methods, combined with an analysis of regression on relations for the Index of Entrepreneurship and Index of ISO standards.

Also, there were have taken into account other sources to have thorough research such as classified existing data and materials about entrepreneurship, quality management, and ISO standards, the updated ones together with the previously published works and scholarly articles books, as well as online libraries.

There are strong and sustained relations between quality management / ISO standards and the climate of do-

ing business (Ceko, 2016a). There are strong and sustained relations between the climate of doing business and life quality, which is already verified scientifically (Ceko, 2016b). Improving the quality management system/compliance with ISO standards along with business regulations/business environment can improve people's quality of life. Countries around the world are recently facing issues affecting business development and performance, business performance, economic development and growth, sustainable development, and quality of life. The establishment of quality institutions, quality infrastructure, and worldwide business, using ISO standards, will have a positive impact on business practices and business behavior, as it leads to economic growth and improved quality of life for people in a broader perspective, within the framework of long-term sustainable development.

MATERIAL AND METHODS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is the creation or extraction of economic value (Diochon & Anderson, 2011, Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017, Alvarez & Busenitz & Lowell, 2001). With this definition, entrepreneurship is seen as a change, often involving risks beyond what is commonly encountered in entrepreneurship, that may include values other than mere economics.

An entrepreneur is a person who starts and/or invests in one or more businesses, takes on the majority of the risks, and benefits heavily in return. The process of starting a business is called entrepreneurship. The entrepreneur is frequently viewed as a creator of novel concepts, products, services, businesses, or methods. An entity that can transform inventions or technologies into goods and services is referred to as an entrepreneur in the study of economics. In this sense, entrepreneurship refers to both established companies and new companies' activities. Different schools of thought are accepted in entrepreneurship as an academic discipline. It has been studied within disciplines such as management, economics, sociology, and economic history (Lindgren & Packendorff, 2009, Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007).

Entrepreneurship is the act of becoming an entrepreneur or owner or manager of a business that seeks profit through risk and initiative. An entrepreneur acts as a manager and oversees the start-up and growth of a business.

Entrepreneurship is the process by which individuals or groups identify business opportunities and acquire and deploy the resources necessary to exploit them.

They can participate in business opportunities regardless of the size of the company.

Four criteria are required to be able to become an entrepreneur.

1. First, there must be an opportunity or situation to redistribute resources for profit.
2. Second, entrepreneurship requires human differences, such as the ability to better reach certain people or recognize information about opportunities.
3. Third, it is necessary to take risks.
4. Fourth, the entrepreneurial process requires organizational personnel and resources (Shane, 2003).

Entrepreneurs use their time, energy, and resources to create value for others. In return, they pay money for it, so that the beneficiaries are both consumers and entrepreneurs who create value.

Entrepreneurs may employ the following techniques:

1. Innovation of new goods, services, or procedures.
2. Pay attention to customer input and make adjustments.
3. Improvement of processes continuously (CPI).
4. Investigation of novel business models.
5. Identifying and solving issues.
6. The application of technology.
7. Application of business intelligence.
8. Employing economic tactics.
9. Designing upcoming goods and services.
10. Improved talent management.
11. Innovative and interactive networking strategies for entrepreneurs (Qureshi, 2015, Adel & Mahrous & Hammad, 2020).

These strategies are part of the quality management subject too (Ceko & Meçalla, 2017).

Several entrepreneurship challenges have been identified for the pandemic and post-pandemic periods (GEM Report), including the fact that in some countries, one in two adults agreed that their household income had decreased; comparing 2021 to 2019 (pre-pandemic); and the fact that Total.

Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA; GEM's most well-known indicator, representing the percentage of adults who are starting or running a new business) has typically decreased and this has also been the case.

This may be a sign of a large number of informal "survival" businesses, which are often started during economic hardship when there aren't any other options or social safety nets, and when people turn to entrepreneurship as their only option left. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis presented fresh opportunities for business owners all over the world, as has always been the case during times of crisis.

However, despite favorable opinions of how simple it is to launch a company, self-confidence in one's skills and abilities, and other factors, many business owners were held back by their fear of failure (GEM, 2022).

BUSINESS SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Entrepreneurship and quality management are subjects of a discipline called Business sustainable management, which is concerned about:

- The current global situation, necessary changes, and methods for rewiring the economy to close the

sustainability gap.

- The benefits of sustainability for businesses and the necessity of strong leadership for change.
- The role that business and civil society play in forming a zero-carbon economy, as well as the use of policy instruments and international agreements.
- The value chain: Putting business strategies and practices for sourcing, producing, and consuming things sustainably into practice.
- How cutting-edge technology, planning, and design can support sustainable business.
- How to persuade internal and external stakeholders to support sustainability strategies and goals.
- How businesses can work together with corporate, government, and non-profit actors to bring about large-scale change in the sustainability space (BSMC, 2022).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP INDEX

The CEOWORLD magazine's Entrepreneurship Index assesses a total of 100 economies that account for 95 percent of global GDP.

To construct an overall "best countries for entrepreneurship" index, the overall rating takes into account a wide range of characteristics, including innovation, competitiveness, infrastructure, labor skills, access to money, and business openness.

Starting a business requires courage, perseverance, and a marketable idea anyplace, but certain economies make it just a little bit simpler for entrepreneurs to get started.

If you're looking for the fiest place to start a business, you might not h ve to look too far.

Researchers collated, examined, and compared countries in six important categories: innovation, competitiveness, labor skills, infrastructure, access to finance, and business openness.

Researchers examined 18 indicators that fit within one of the six categories to assess those aspects.

On a scale of 1-100, an index was built to score the individual indicators. Each indication received equal weighting within each of the six categories, with some indicators consisting of 2-3 sub-indicators that were likewise equally weighted.

The rankings are the product of a thorough analytical process that used many data sources and did not rely on investment promotion agency (IPA) or government industry trade data submissions.

The margin of sampling error for the entire sample of 120,000 people is 1.2 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, it is important to remember that, as with all survey research, there are other sources of error such as coverage, nonresponse, and measurement error that could affect the results (WMEC, 2022).

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ORGANIZATION AND BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines sustainability as the ability to sustain or improve performance across time. Looking at it from a different angle, sustainability is concerned with the financial, social, and environmental well-being of businesses.

Sustainability broadly consists of three components:

- Economic/financial sustainability in business;
- Environmental sustainability in business;
- Social responsibility in business.

Two types of ISO Standards are helpful for the successful implementation of Sustainability practices:

- Standards that can be verified
- Standards for guidance.

BENEFIT OF USING ISO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

According to ISO (ISO, 2021) governments, industry, consumers, the economy, society, environment, can benefit from using ISO standards as per below:

Government

Regulators can rely on ISO standards as a solid base on which to create public policy that helps further Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as human rights, water, and energy efficiency, public health, and more. Recognized the world over, International Standards also help governments achieve their national and international commitments (ISO, 2021).

Industry

Industry plays a key role in achieving all the SDGs and ISO standards help it do that by providing guidelines and frameworks on everything, from employee health and well-being to energy consumption, to resilient and eco-friendly infrastructures (ISO, 2021).

Consumers

While helping to achieve the SDGs is high on the agenda of business leaders and policymakers, many of the advantages are realized at the local community level. Reduced poverty, improved health, cleaner and more abundant water, and safe and secure infrastructures are just some of the benefits to be gained from implementing ISO standards (ISO, 2021).

Economic

ISO International Standards promote economic sustainability by facilitating international trade, improving a country's national quality infrastructure, and promoting sustainable business practices (A quality infrastructure is a system that contributes to governmental policy objectives such as industrial development, global trade competitiveness, efficient use of natural and human resources, food safety, health, the environment, and climate change). They cover everything from efficient farming methods to anti-bribery management systems (ISO, 2021).

Social

ISO International Standards support social sustainability by assisting countries and communities in improving their populations' health and well-being. They cover all aspects of social welfare, from healthcare systems and related products to social inclusion and accessibility (ISO, 2021).

Environmental

ISO International Standards assist enterprises and countries control their environmental effect, which promotes environmental sustainability. They cover such aspects as implementing an environmental management system, measuring and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption, and encouraging responsible consumption (ISO, 2021).

QUALITY MANAGEMENT, DOING BUSINESS, AND GLOBAL TRENDS ON ISO CERTIFICATES

The act of supervising all activities and duties required to maintain a target degree of perfection is known as quality management. This includes developing and implementing quality assurance and planning, as well as quality control and improvement. Quality management guarantees the consistency of an organization, product, or service. It has four main components: quality planning, quality assurance, quality control, and quality improvement (Keneth, 2005).

Quality management is concerned not only with the quality of products and services but also with the methods employed to accomplish them. To achieve more consistent quality, quality management employs quality assurance and control of processes as well as products. Several means to achieve quality management are between doing business regulations and rules, ISO certificates included, which are focused more on the quality of procedures private and public subjects follow, which at the end of the day brings a higher quality of products and services (Ceko, 2013).

Because societies require regulation—and businesses, as a part of society, are no exception—ISO certificates are now part of business and trade regulations because they are the minimum requirements for the characteristics of processes, products, and services used by private and public entities/subjects to be acceptable to their clients and markets.

Modern private and public enterprises cannot exist without this standard. And if markets are allowed to operate without standards, they will deliver poor results and, ultimately, inferior living quality for citizens. Entrepreneurs must establish certain procedures and standards when starting a new business or entering a new phase of enterprise development, allowing the business to live beyond minimum frontiers, e, export, and import, participate in public procurement procedures, and finally attract as many clients as possible in order to maximize profits and achieve other business objectives.

All of these difficulties revolve around standards, which facilitate commercial transactions and allow businesses to run efficiently. With 1 609 294 certificates issued worldwide in 2014, there is a slight up on the previous year, which demonstrates a moderate growth for almost all the ISO management systems standards around the world (ISO, 2021), confirming trends observed over the last two years. This market stabilization is offset, however, by three strong performers demonstrating more consistent growth.

Although less spectacular than in previous years, ISO 50001 for energy management shows a 40% increase, driven once again by Germany, which accounts for 50% of the 6 778 certificates reported. Similarly, food management standard ISO 22000 continues to deliver reliable performance with a 14 % growth rate, while ISO 16949 for the automotive sector shows accelerated progression with a commendable 8 %, signaling that economic recovery in the auto industry is holding up (ISO, 2014).

Table 1. ISO Survey Executive Summary. 2020 (ISO, 2020a)

ISO standards	Total valid certificates	Total number of sites
ISO 9001 – QMS	916,842	1,299,837
ISO 14001 – EP	348,473	568,798
ISO 45001 – HSW	190,481	251,191
ISO/IEC 27001 – ISM	44,499	84,181
ISO 22000 – QSGF	33,741	39,894
ISO 13485 – H	25,656	34,954
ISO 50001 – EE	19,731	45,092
ISO 20000-1 – IT	7,846	9,927
ISO 22301 – BC	2,205	4,662
ISO 37001 – ABMS	2,065	5,946
ISO 39001 – RTS	972	2,341
ISO 28000 - SRMS	520	968

When compared with the 2019 edition, the results are consistent when looking at the overall figures for most of the countries. Overall, the total number of valid certificates for the 12 management system standards examined in the survey has increased by 18% since 2019. Part of this considerable rise might be attributed to the significant growth in ISO 45001 certification; this standard was issued in 2018 and hence had a restricted number of certificates in the previous edition of the survey.

The pace of rise for ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 has been higher than in prior years, with +4% for ISO 9001 and +12% for ISO 14001, owing primarily to a significant increase in China. Similarly to earlier editions of the survey, the results reveal certain changes at the country level, which can be explained by factors relating to the participants, such as the non-participation of certain certifying bodies for those specific nations.

In the 2020 survey, this is the case, particularly for ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 for Belgium, Korea, Mexico, Ireland, and the Philippines and for ISO 28000, for China (ISO, 2020).

The most important thing related to this paper is the declaration of the International Standards Organization that the ISO Survey is not a database, but just a list of ISO certificates issued and a list of countries based on alphabetic order, neither based on the number of certificates issued per country (ISO, 2020b).

How ISO standards help companies and bring benefits to their clients

As it is stated in the GEM Report Policymakers could allay much of this fear by drawing greater attention to entrepreneurial success stories both large and small and implementing risk-mitigating initiatives that reduce real and perceived impediments for startups (GEM, 2022), besides other factors, ISO standards help on this issue.

ISO STANDARDS HAVE HELPED VARIOUS COMPANIES AND OUR CLIENTS HAVE BENEFITED BECAUSE OF:

1. Reduced risk: The underlying reason for ISO compliance is that entrepreneurial businesses face greater risk than established organizations and hence have a stronger justification for risk mitigation. If a young company does not have consistent policies, methods, and procedures, it risks wasting valuable resources. And this can imply more than just missing the numbers; it can even mean going out of business.
2. Builds in consistency: It is not enough for newcomers to have a "general knowledge" of the minutiae necessary in producing high-quality products or services. Typically, the founders and a few workers have the necessary knowledge, but it is not routinely shared throughout the firm. ISO standards, on the other hand, document rules, methods, and procedures so that everyone is aware of and able to work within common guidelines.
3. Measures ROI: Furthermore, ISO standards serve as a checklist against which a small firm, whose financial talent and systems may be lacking, can measure crucial entrepreneurial objectives, such as return on investment (ROI).
4. Builds credibility: Finally, standards function as an imprimatur, convincing partners to engage with, and customers net to buy from, an untested entity (Glyn & Stove, 2003).

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS (RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, THE PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY)

The association between the Entrepreneur-ship Index (E Index) and the ISOStandardss Index from a worldwide perspective and global ecosystem served as the research framework.

Given the scarcity of numerical, statistical, and algebraic reasons on the relationships between the E Index and the ISO Standards Index, this study employs the building mode theory and seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Ho: There is a strong connection/relation between E Index and the ISO Standards Index.
2. H1: There is not a strong connection/relation between E Index and the ISO Standards Index.

... considering that there is little research on the relationship between the E Index and the ISO standards Index, as listed in the literature review of this paper research, and considering that theoretical approaches on the relationship between entrepreneurship and ISO standards, and specifically between the E Index and the ISO standards Index, as well as numerical, statistical, and algebraic arguments on the relationship between them, do not exist.

Specifically, while acknowledging the importance of connections/relationships between entrepreneurship and ISO standards, prior empirical research impresses with declarations that this connection exists, but does not explain statistically if there is any connection/relationship between them; thus, a theory supported by analysis and evidence was required. As a result of this critical analysis, an exploratory method was taken, employing a single in-depth case study technique, which is suited for developing an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and allowing for closer examination of theoretical constructs.

CASE SELECTION

The case was chosen based on three primary criteria: a theoretical approach, the applicability of the relationships, and the practical positive impacts on the relationships between the E Index and the ISO Standards Index. The case project was divided into three stages: (1) identifying needs for entrepreneurship, (2) identifying needs for quality management and ISO standards certification, and (3) determining the rank of countries for entrepreneurship and ISO standards index.

DATA COLLECTION

Data for E Index has been gathered from Entrepreneurship Report 2021, an annual ranking of countries by their achievement on the subject, compiled by the CEOWORLD magazine (WMREC, 2022).

Data for the number of businesses registered worldwide has been gathered from HitHorizon (HitHorizon, 2022).

Data for the ISO Standards Index has been gathered from the ISO Certificates Report 2022 (ISO, 2020).

To prepare the ISO standards Index I have divided the number of ISO certificates issued per country by the number of businesses registered in the country, resulting in the ISO standards Index per country, preparing the list of countries based on this Index.

DATA ANALYSIS

A correlation and regressive analysis (inferential statistics) between these Indexes for 91 countries worldwide were performed.

In the table below, 91 countries are listed for the E Index, and ISO Standards Index (prepared by the author of this article as per the explanation given in the paragraph above).

Based on these data and information from secondary resources, a regression between E Index and ISO certificates issued per country was built. Data from ISO about ISO standards certificates issued worldwide (taken from ISO report) didn't help directly, because an Index was needed, so the Index divided the number of ISO standards certificates issued per country by the number of business entities in the country, finding the ISO standards Index, as explained above.

Results

After listing countries per this Index, regression analysis between the E Index and ISO Standards Index was drafted, based on which, it can be stated that the relations between the E Index and ISO Standards Index are not high, verifying the H1 hypothesis which was: "There is no relation between E Index and ISO Standards Index, against Ho that was: "There is a strong relation between E Index and ISO Standards Index", which is a hypothesis that comes from the highly estimated situation from international organizations and believes of people who work on these subjects, which could never prove this hypothesis statistically.

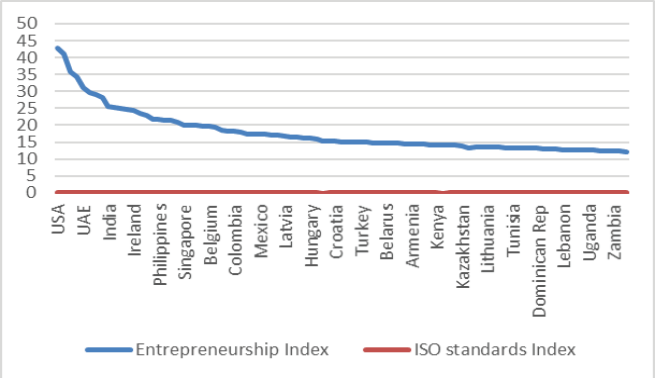
In table 1, countries are listed as per the E Index, which served as the "Y" at the regression procedures, and ISO standard Index which served as the "X" at regression procedures, handled in an excel program.

Table 1. List of countries based on the E Index (CEOWORLD) and the ISO Standards Index (drawn from the author of this paper)

No	Country	E Index	ISO standards Index
1.	USA	42.88	0.00095
2.	Germany	41.05	0.021
3.	UK	35.8	0.00884
4.	Israel	34.25	0.018
5.	UAE	31.01	0.01185
6.	Poland	29.75	0.00656
7.	Spain	29.01	0.0146
8.	Sweden	28.16	0.00575
9.	India	25.47	0.00082
10.	France	25.34	0.0054
11.	Australia	25.05	0.00576
12.	Estonia	24.64	0.0071
13.	Ireland	24.37	0.0136
14.	Malaysia	23.6	0.011497
15.	S. Arabia	22.98	0.003433
16.	Canada	21.8	0.0052
17.	Philippines	21.62	0.00544
18.	Denmark	21.42	0.0071
19.	Switzerland	21.34	0.022
20.	Japan	20.71	0.011234
21.	Singapore	20.05	0.0153
22.	China	20.04	0.004338
23.	Austria	19.92	0.0173
24.	Portugal	19.73	0.0114
25.	Belgium	19.72	0.00467
26.	Italy	19.46	0.021
27.	New Zealand	18.55	0.00321
28.	Thailand	18.32	0.00505
29.	Colombia	18.25	0.00558
30.	Bulgaria	18.05	0.0129
31.	Chile	17.41	0.0293
32.	Czech Rep	17.37	0.0207
33.	Mexico	17.37	0.00209
34.	Norway	17.22	0.00695
35.	Cyprus	17.16	0.0053
36.	Argentina	16.96	0.00951
37.	Latvia	16.76	0.01173
38.	Serbia	16.55	0.0189
39.	Brazil	16.4	0.003433
40.	Romania	16.25	0.0144
41.	Hungary	16.19	0.009254
42.	Netherlands	16	0.0072
43	Indonesia	15.42	0.000018
44.	Greece	15.23	0.034
45.	Croatia	15.2	0.0149
46.	S. Africa	15.12	0.00196
47.	Luxembourg	15.05	0.00231
48.	Rwanda	14.96	0.000389
49.	Turkey	14.95	0.00132
50.	Slovenia	14.86	0.0127
51.	Slovakia	14.8	0.0166
52.	Russia	14.79	0.001895

53.	Belarus	14.71	0.0494
54.	Iceland	14.65	0.0136
55.	Peru	14.65	0.00162
56.	Qatar	14.54	0.078
57.	Armenia	14.41	0.00124
58.	Malta	14.4	0.00596
59.	Morocco	14.32	0.01886
60.	Moldova	14.23	0.001201
61.	Kenya	14.2	0.000219
62.	Nigeria	14.11	0.000014
63.	Azerbaijan	14.07	0.144
64.	Finland	14	0.0082
65.	Kazakhstan	13.87	0.001995
66.	Albania	13.16	0.0043
67.	N.R.Macedonia	13.59	0.0191
68.	Georgia	13.57	0.011355
69.	Lithuania	13.55	0.0099
70.	Ukraine	13.53	0.001213
71.	Vietnam	13.44	0.0131
72.	Jordan	13.38	0.00282
73.	Tunisia	13.38	0.00212
74.	Ghana	13.35	0.00317
75.	Bahrain	13.34	0.0093
76.	Sri Lanka	13.18	0.001904
77.	Dominican Rep	13.16	0.00311
78.	Costa Rica	13.06	0.00428
79.	Bangladesh	12.99	0.00126
80.	Jamaica	12.91	0.00406
81.	Lebanon	12.8	0.00354
82.	Iran	12.66	0.0288
83.	Cameroon	12.65	0.00046
84.	Egypt	12.59	0.00094
85.	Uganda	12.59	0.000144
86.	Trind&Tob.	12.52	0.0048
87.	Algeria	12.28	0.000343
88.	Ethiopia	12.27	0.00113
89.	Zambia	12.27	0.00004
90.	Pakistan	12.24	0.022
91..	El Salvador	12.18	0.00147

In Graphic 1 a correlation analysis, in a graphical mode is given, where is shown there is no connection/relation between E Index and the ISO standards Index.



Graphic 1 depicts the missing relationships between the E Index and the ISO Standards Index (drawn by the author of this study).

In the three tables below, tables 2, 3, and 4, statistical results about missing connections/relations between E Index and ISO Standards Index are given, where R^2 = 0.248363 shows a weak connection/relation between these two Indexes.

Table 2

SUMMARY OUTPUT	
REGRESSION STATISTICS	
Multiple R	0.49836
R Square	0.248363
Adjusted R Space	0.237127
Standard Error	16.04706
Observations	90

Table 3

ANOVA					
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	1	7572.848	7572.848	29.4082	5.08E-07
Residual	89	22918.21	257.508		
Total	90	30491.06			

Table 4

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*
Intercept	0	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A
0.00095	434.2485	80.07633	5.422933	4.98E-07	275.1386	593.3585	275.1386	593.3585

With these results, it has been verified in practice there is no connection/relation between E Index and ISO Standards Index.

DISCUSSION

In this study, by making use of a regressive analysis, it was verified statistically that there is no relation between E Index and ISO Standards Index, but this doesn't mean the relations are not needed, or they can't be achieved in the future. The question is when these relations will be achieved and verified, and what is needed next.

It is true and we all, World Bank, United Nations, and ISO including, do believe that entrepreneurship is important for economic growth and there is an improving ISO standard certification process all around the globe, but the question is how we can better match and adopt the entrepreneurship activity with ISO standards.

Scientific management of factors of production creates opportunities for improving entrepreneurship climate and business activity, applying quality management principles and ISO standards, as efficient and effective tools, and this is needed, immediately, but scientific management of factors of production requires ISO standards application in a wider approach and not only for private subjects which are looking to participate in public procurements as well as for exporting goods accompanied with ISO certificates, so, a real connection and relations between the E Index and ISO standards should exist.

THEORY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Concerning the theory, based on the findings of this study, a new avenue for research has been opened in the field of relationships between entrepreneurship and quality management, particularly between the E Index and the ISO Standards Index, which are viewed as tools for improving life quality all over the world.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was conducted using a large amount of data on the E Index and offers for the first time information about the ISO Standards Index for the year 2020.

Further study is required to validate these relationships, which must be strengthened in the future in order to make the Entrepreneurship Index and the ISO Standards Index real tools for improving living quality all around the world.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Scientific management of factors of production creates opportunities for entrepreneurship activities, applying quality management principles and ISO standards, as efficient and effective tools, and this is needed, immediately.
2. Scientific management of factors of production requires ISO standards application; so, a connection and relations between the Entrepreneurship Index (E Index) and ISO standards should exist, for healthier business ecosystems.
3. The general outcome of the research is looking forward to achieving and maintaining entrepreneurship activities, applying quality management principles and ISO standards, as efficient and effective tools, as an immediate need, all parties should look forward to making sure building relations and connections between Entrepreneurship Index and ISO Standards Index, which currently doesn't exist.
4. There are no strong and sustained relations between sustainable development and quality management/ISO standards.
5. 5. Improving quality management systems and adhering to ISO standards, in tandem with efforts to improve the business climate and increase entrepreneurial activities, will provide a clear sign of global life quality improvement.
6. There is no relation between entrepreneurship and ISO standards, even though it is assumed that it should exist to promote sustainable entrepreneurship with no support at all.

ACKNOWLEDGE

The contribution of this paper, mostly on the field of relations between entrepreneurship and ISO standards, shows that international organizations, those mentioned in this paper, should carefully investigate the issue of building research relations between concepts, especially between important concepts and principles like those of Entrepreneurship and Quality management principles too.

This critical analysis article emphasizes the economic and social importance of Entrepreneurship and ISO standards, for current and future generations.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND ITS ROLE IN DECISION-MAKING FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to highlight the perception of residents about public services provided by the local government and residents' perception of participation in public decision-making for the allocation of economic resources by the local government. The research method in this study is based on the study of literature, analysis, and monitoring carried out by independent institutions and organizations on community participation in local government decision-making (Desk research) and observation through interviewing residents in the area of study for the collection of primary data. The results of this study show the fragility of the approach of community involvement in local government for local planning and development in the study area. The improvement of public services and the active participation of residents in local planning and development is one of the most important objectives of local government reform. Efforts for sustainable development, referring also to the data of this study, should be accompanied by efforts to build and consolidate the community field.

Keywords: *Public decision-making, community participation, public services, local development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Local government creates the possibility of direct exercise of democracy and participation of residents in development processes. Local institutions have the legal responsibility to inform residents how local economic resources are used and to ensure their participation in local government decision-making for economic, social, and cultural development. The active participation of residents in local planning and development leads to a better definition of priorities and responsibilities, for a greater engagement of citizens and local government, and helps to better understand their roles, aspirations, and expectations. Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of public funds in support of sustainable local development in meeting the expectations of residents will contribute to the improvement of the quality of local governance. Nowadays, the comprehensive approach to local government decision-making and the community is increasingly emphasized as an important factor without which there can be no sustainable development. Community participation in decision-making for the allocation of economic resources in the public sector is an important issue that is closely related to the economic efficiency of the use of resources and the consolidation of democracy in a country. Community participation in decision-making, as one of the essential elements of sustainable development, creates the right interaction and makes the residents themselves guide their behavior in accordance with the objectives of sustainable development. The objectives of the study aim to highlight: 1) the important role of the community in public decision-making for the use of economic resources 2) the solution of problems begins with the participation of residents in the decision-making of the local government, 3) the perception of residents about public services provided by local government, 4) residents' perception of participation in public decision-making for the allocation of economic resources by the local government.

Research methodology: The research method in this study is based on the study of literature, analysis, and monitoring carried out by independent institutions and organizations on community participation in local government decision-making (Desk research) and observation through interviewing residents in the area of study for the collection of primary data. The results of the data analysis show that most of the residents interviewed do not know the development plans of their residences. But the communities themselves have already realized that their participation in the planning process for the development of their settlements is necessary. For this reason, local government and all other actors must create effective mechanisms to ensure the participation of residents in decision-making for the use of public funds and sustainable development, making the process more participatory and inclusive.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of citizen involvement in policy-making is treated as one of the most important aspects for improving the quality of local governance (Oliveira & Campolargo, 2015; Sadoway & Univerisity, 2018; Trencher, 2019) which is reflected in meeting the real needs and expectations of the community. For this reason, policymakers are committed to promoting to encourage the engagement of the population by turning this into a practice of local governance (Correia, Marques, & Teixeira, 2022; Correia, Teixeira, and Marques, 2020). The achievement of local development objectives seems to depend on the adoption of a participatory model including meaningful community engagement,

together with other actors and local government that will lead to agreement on development directions and goals (Faulkner, 2003). Participation was defined as the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations (Stiefel and Wolfe: 1994:5). Participation is defined as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them (World Bank, 1995). Among other aspects, it is important that these practices remind citizens of their role (Carreira, Machado, & Vasconcelos, 2016). Cort ´es-Cediel, Cantador, and Bolívar (2021) reviewed the literature and the initiatives of the EUROC-ITIES network and noted an increasing interest in smart city projects involving citizen participation, mostly on the governance side. But, according to Wolf, Borges, Marques, & Castro, 2019, very little research has been done on the methods used to promote participatory methods' democratic role and the respective barriers that exist to citizens' participation. According to this perspective, the focus is on the direct participation of key stakeholders, instead of indirect participation through elected representatives. Dutton and Hall (1989) point out that this has led to a need for decision-making bodies such as governments to actively seek and consider community views. Engagement and involvement of multiple groups are considered very important issues in a sustainable development approach and the action by citizens is aimed at influencing decisions taken mainly by public representatives and officials.

The community field is similar to other specific social fields, except that it pursues the common interests and needs of the entire community. Indeed, a locality's economy, sociocultural characteristics, and physical resources are essential parts of the life and experience of the community and its inhabitants. However, these characteristics serve only as background to local life and reveal little about the motives and ability of residents to act together. Community emerges when feedback from the experiences of conscious citizens comes together to address common needs. The emergence of the community field brings into focus shared interests in aspects of local life (Bridger et al. 2010). Both local residents and their organizations interact to improve the overall well-being of the community, and this is known as community agency (Wilkinson, 1991). The community has its own expertise contributing according to the nature of the problem. Citizens, for example, have important areas of expertise including knowledge about local conditions and the environment, related to their way of life, and possess information about how similar problems have been solved before where they live. The importance of citizen involvement in policy-making is treated as one of the most important aspects for improving the quality of local governance (Oliveira & Campolargo, 2015; Sadoway & Univerisity, 2018; Trencher, 2019) which is reflected in meeting the real needs and expectations of the community. For this reason, policymakers are committed to promoting to encourage the engagement of the population by turning this into a practice of local governance (Correia, Marques, & Teixeira, 2022; Correia, Teixeira, and Marques, 2020). Among other aspects, it is important that these practices remind citizens of their role (Carreira, Machado, & Vasconcelos, 2016). Cort ´es-Cediel, Cantador, and Bolívar (2021) reviewed the literature and the initiatives of the EUROC-ITIES network and noted an increasing interest in smart city projects involving citizen participation, mostly on the governance side. But, according to Wolf, Borges, Marques, & Castro, 2019, very little research has been done on the methods used to promote participatory methods' democratic role and the respective barriers that exist to citizens' participation (Wolf, Borges, Marques, & Castro, 2019). Today, more and more, when we talk about development, we refer to sustainable development and the requirements that society, in the local, national, and international aspects, must respect in order to move on the path of sustainable development. According to Jeffrey C. Bridger and A.E. Luloff, definitions of sustainable community development are parallel to definitions of sustainable development. The main difference involves the apparent reduction in geographic scope: sustainable community development is local. The Bristol Agreement, which is based on the WCED vision of sustainable development, is the most prominent definition of community-based sustainable development in the academic and policy literature and defines them as places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. (ODPM, 2005, p. 6–7). Community-based development is also positive because it avoids conflicts between different actors involved or different interest groups, implements the policy of coordination and helps to create synergy by sharing knowledge, opinions, and skills among all community members. (Kibicho, 2008). Community participation in local government decision-making is related to increased sensitivity to social responsibilities as well as the sustainability of development. It has gained popularity as part of strategies for development and environmental protection. From a social, economic, and environmental perspective, if local people are not involved in the entire development process, there is a high chance that the resources on which development is based will be destroyed and the investment lost (Brandon, 1996). From a moral perspective, it is argued that management by local people coupled with decentralized decision-making is preferable and may be more accountable and sustainable in the long term. Local government has the opportunity and advantage to better address the preferences and needs of residents, but often local decisions, policies, and programs do not consider the full social, economic, or environmental consequences they cause in local communities. This study is based on the sociological tradition of social exchange and is guided by the premise that individual feelings can be important elements that influence people's social response and the community's supportive or non-supportive attitude towards development. Among the many theories that have been proposed to investigate people's attitudes, the social exchange theory has been given theoretical priority because it facilitates a logical explanation of the positive and negative aspects of

development and enables the examination of relationships between exchange factors and their consequences. The interdisciplinary field of cognitive science has made important contributions, and one of these, perhaps the most neglected, is the repeated demonstration that humans are remarkably adept at processing information. In this respect, people should be seen as active, curious, and problem-solving beings. Based on these cognitive and emotional themes, Kaplan lays out the necessity of reconceptualizing human nature by asking that in logical reasoning, take from human nature what is natural to confront the issues that require solutions. He reasons that people resist change if they perceive change as reducing the quality of their lives and that they are also worried about the future of the country where they live. By recognizing human tendencies and the circumstances that support motivation, as a first step, three aspects of information processing have been identified that are thought to have a strong influence on human motivation and behavior: 1) people are motivated to know, to understand what 'happens and do not want to be confused and disoriented, 2) are motivated to learn, examine and discover, they prefer receiving information and tend to have their questions answered, and want to participate, play a role in what is happening around them, they hate being incompetent or powerless. This principle is particularly important in the context of this study, arguing that solving problems begins with the participation of residents in local government decision-making. But "Participation" means that many people are engaged in an activity. The phrase "problem-solving" is a reminder that the purpose of the participation process is not to implement a plan that someone else has already made or designed, but to find new solutions to problems that meet the needs of the participants. To make this feasible, people must be given the opportunity to 1) Be in front of a focused task that needs problem-solving. "Target groups are responsible for achieving these objectives by encouraging innovation and participation across the board" (Atkisson, 1995); 2) To face the challenge of finding a solution that is satisfactory for them and to feel its responsibility; 3) Their participation should be effective in solving the problem. On the one hand, it may seem unfair to put decision-making in the hands of many people, but to understand the issue of inclusion it is useful to consider the difference between 1) telling people what to do, 2) asking people what they want to do and, 3) helping people understand the issue by inviting them to consider possible solutions. The first is the most useful, the second involves participation in a limited sense, and the third describes the proposed approach as not participation in the sense of a published survey, rather, it involves understanding, consideration, and problem-solving as a component essential of participation. In this context, different types of expertise will need to be available for effective participation according to the nature of the problem. Generating desirable solutions reduces the feeling of helplessness, and the fear that nothing can be done is replaced by the discovery that, in fact, a great deal has been done. True participation creates this feeling in a person. With his alternative to the Reasonable Person Model, Kaplan (2000) seeks to find a stable source of motivation, the reduction of the corrosive sense of helplessness, and the possibility to generate new solutions that are not perceived as a threat to the person's quality of life. This approach is based on a coherent conception of human nature that considers the relationships between how people approach new information, how information is related to motivation, and how information and motivation are related to behavior change. In this way, the inclusion and active participation of residents in the development process in their residences can be realized. They will be motivated to contribute to increasing the responsibility of the local government for the good use of economic resources to increase the well-being of the residents. Also, it is important that the planning approach is captured by the dominant values that exist in the community and to the extent that these values are incorporated into the vision for the future (Simpson, 2001).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method in this study is based on the literature study, analysis, and monitoring carried out by independent institutions and organizations on community participation in local government decision-making (Desk research) and observation through interviewing residents in the study area for the collection of primary data. The study method consists of interviewing randomly selected residents to get their thoughts and opinions regarding the measurement and evaluation of the indicators taken in the study. The questionnaire constructed for this purpose consists of a first section where information on demographic data regarding age, gender, education, and employment is requested. In the second section, information is requested to measure the assessment of residents on public services, on the recognition of development plans in their place of residence, if the local government receives their opinion on the development plans, and if they wish to give their opinion on these plans. The study area encompasses the Sukth, Katund i Ri, and Rrashbull administrative units in the Durra Municipality. Residents of this area are populating target that owns the information we desired to respond objectives of this study. The method of choice is based on the concept of random selection. It is considered the best technique to select a representative sample. It is a probability choice, so each element of the population has an equal probability of being part of the solution. A total of 310 residents were interviewed and 310 questionnaires were completed, of which 300 are valid. The analysis of the primary data obtained through the structured individual interview with the residents was done with the method of descriptive statistics. Information handling consists of organizing and classifying data, preparing the structure of the analysis, and presenting the results.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The first section of the analyzed data summarized in Table 1 describes the profile of the interviewees. The results show that 20% of respondents are 18-35 years

old, 38% are 36-55 years old, 30% are 56-65 years old and 12% are over 65 years old. The interviewees are from all categories of age, gender, level of education, and employment status.

Table 1 Profile of respondents

Characteristic							
Age	%	Gender	%	Education	%	Employment Status	%
18-35 years old	20	M	57	8-year education	50	Employed	22
36-55 years old	38	F	63	Medium education	41	Self-employed	17
56-65 years old	30			High education	9	Unemployed	61
Over 65 years old	12						
Total	100		100		100		100

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area

The data presented in Table 2 show residents' assessment of the most important public services provided by the local government that affect their level of well-being.

Table 2. Residents' responses regarding the improvement of public services after the merger with the Durres Municipality

	Are the services provided by the local government improved after the merger with the Durres Municipality?	Yes	No	The same
		%	%	%
1	Water supply	26	42	33
2	The lighting of public environments	20	46	34
3	Conditions in kindergartens and schools	14	42	44
4	Primary health service	21	34	44
5	Road infrastructure	10	44	46
6	Urban public transport	29	36	35
7	Urban waste management	36	31	33
8	Administrative services	14	62	24

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area

The data presented in Table 3 show residents' assessment of recognition of local government plans and the use of economic resources for the development of their area.

Table 3. On the recognition of local government plans by residents

	Do you know:	**Yes**	**No**
		%	%
1	the plans for the development of your city/village?	3	97
2	how many local government resources are available?	2	98
3	how these resources are used by the local government?	1	99

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area

The data presented in Table 4 show residents' assessment of participation in the planning process for local development.

Table 4. The participation in the planning process by residents

	Item of the questionnaire (Affirmation)	I do not agree	I agree	I am unsure
		%	%	%
1	The development of our city/village needs the participation of residents in the planning process of public services.	0	98	2
2	The local government takes the opinion of the residents about the development plans in my town/village.	88	5	7
3	I would like to give my opinion on the development of my town/ village, but I am not given the opportunity to do so.	6	88	6

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area

The results of the data analysis show that of the interviewed residents, it is estimated that public services have not improved, 62% estimate that they have not improved and 24% estimate them at the same level and only 14% think that they have improved. Also, the interviewees state that the way administrative services are performed creates concern for them. Most of the respondents (97%) state that they do not know the development plans, resources, and their use by the local government and that the local government does not take the opinion of the residents on the development plans; 99% of them do not know how economic resources are used by the local government.

Most of the respondents of residents (98%) think that their participation in the planning process is necessary, and only 5% of them say that the local government takes the opinion of the residents about the development plans, and 88% of them say that they are not given the opportunity to be part of the process.

DISCUSSION

The guiding principle of this study is that community involvement in economic planning and development is a key element in local development decision-making. The knowledge and experiences of community members, which derive from long-term observation and interaction with their residents, make their involvement and participation in sustainable economic and social planning and development irreplaceable. The results of the data analysis show that most of the interviewed residents do not know the development plans of their settlement and how economic resources are used by the local government. But the communities themselves have already realized that their participation in the planning process for the development of their settlements is necessary. However, local government institutions must understand that the purpose of the participation process is to find new solutions by the residents themselves for problems that concern them and that the plans drawn up with their participation, manage to meet the needs of the community. So, it should be noted that the purpose of the participation process is not to implement the plan that the local government draws up without making the community an active part of the entire development plan preparation process. The monitoring of legal obligations and legislation standards on the participation of residents in local government has pointed out the fragility of community participation in local government and the dominant role that political parties and political agendas have in local government activities. The monitoring of the official websites of the municipalities does not allow for the creation of the correct idea of how the municipalities respond to the requests of the citizens, in the function of the legal obligation for the right to information and for local self-government. There are no measurable products that prove the level of transparency and accountability (the level of receiving opinions from interest groups and their reflection, the level of citizen perception towards the most important local issues). Passive participation, by which participants only become familiar with the development of governance processes, but the knowledge is not accompanied by action. For this reason, local government and all other actors must create effective mechanisms to ensure the participation of residents in decision-making for the use of public funds and sustainable development, making the process more participatory and inclusive.

CONCLUSIONS

The strengthening of local government is one of the priorities of the administrative-territorial reform in the country in order to increase the quality of the provision of local public services, but the results of the study in this paper show the shortcomings and problems of local government related to the participation of residents in the planning process and improvement of public services. Decision-making for local governance is often dominated by the narrow interests of different groups, avoiding the active participation of residents in the process of local planning and development. Sustainable development requires that the process of local planning and development be as comprehensive as possible, and this dictates more and more the need to build and consolidate the community field. Even the data in this study evidence the fragility of the approach of community involvement in local government as well as the need for a permanent and constructive communication system that makes possible the active participation of the community in solving problems and better management of the public activity. It is important to understand well what it means to participate in problem-solving and participation in the planning process by insisting on the active role of the community in the entire political process of public decision-making. Efforts for sustainable development, referring also to the data of this study, should be accompanied by efforts to build and consolidate the community field. Based on the results of this study, some recommendations are necessary: The local government should re-evaluate the situation from the perspective of the reality of decision-making and the concrete opportunities that should be created for the realization of community participation in this process. Civil society should orient its activity and various projects, especially from donors, in the direction of creating the social capacities of the community, necessary to become part of the process of the improvement of local governance.

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